



学園キノ

— GAKUEN KINO —

時雨沢恵

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ILLUSTRATION: KOUHAKU KUROBOSHI

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電撃文庫

学園米

GAHJEN KINO

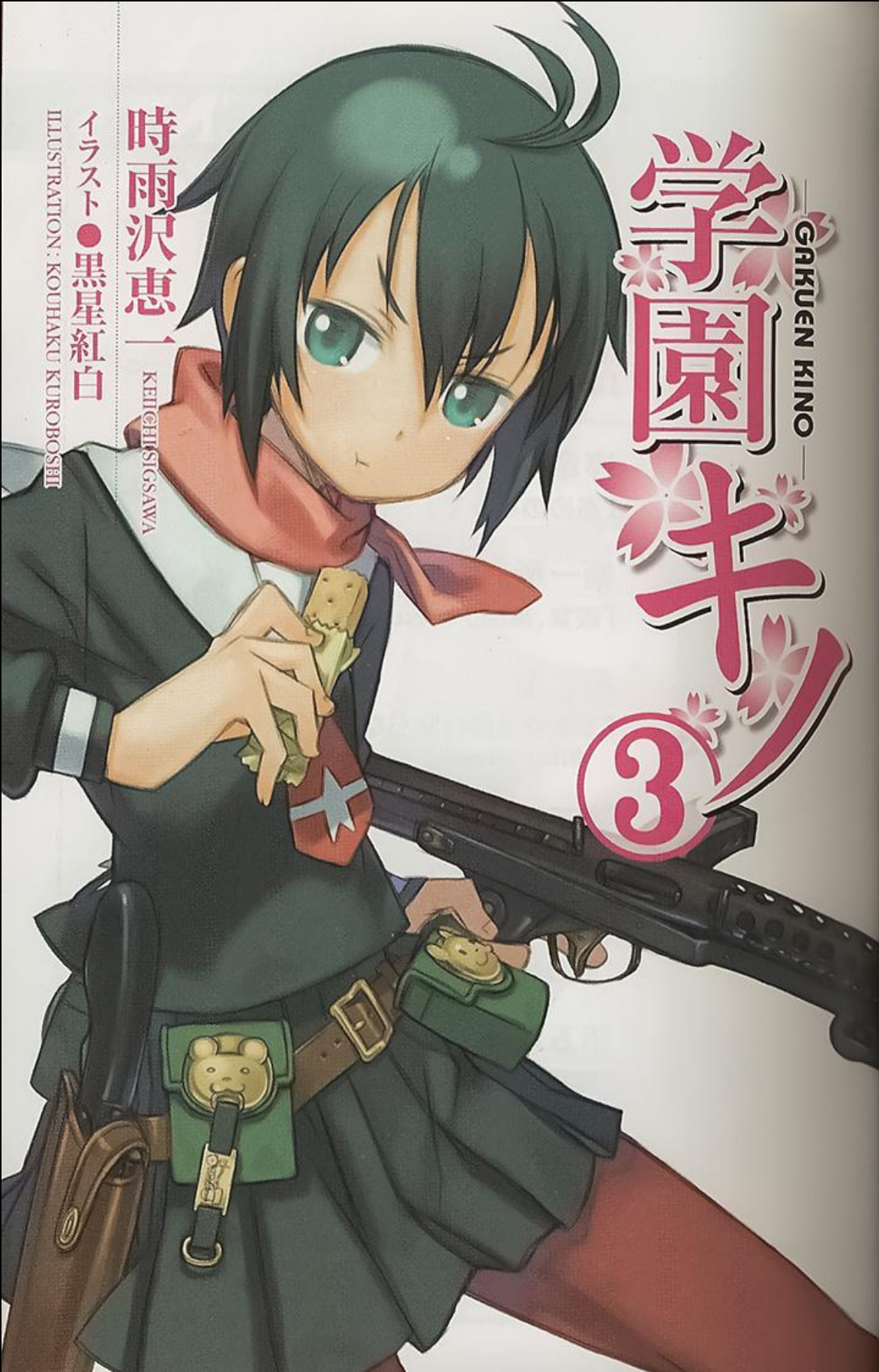
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Kino's Journey Act 4 - School Arc **Chapter 5.5 - Chako's Report -Prologue of Gakuen Kino 3-** **~Chako's Report~**

A certain Mr. Taro Aso (Note: the 92nd Prime Minister of Japan. A term used to denote several classes of non-flying humans) was walking down a very long hallway.

He wore a grey suit with a shiny Diet Member badge on his lapel. Around his neck was a blue tie with white raindrop patterns.

Mr. Aso was walking this light green, windowless, sterile hallway alone with not even a single bodyguard.

Soon, Mr. Aso stopped in front of a certain door. There was nothing written on it, not even a name.

Mr. Aso slowly put his right hand onto a glass panel to the right of the door. The panel flashed faintly.

[Authentication Complete.]

With a mechanical voice announcing his entrance, the door slid open. Mr. Aso stepped inside. The door closed shut.

The room was nearly pitch-black. Very close to the entrance was a large, wooden desk. The only source of light was a small, antique desk lamp perched atop it.

The faint light from the bulb of the lamp dimly illuminated the desk and the chairs. It wasn't enough to reveal anything about the size of the room or any furnishings that might have been hidden away.

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It was very quiet. Not even the humming of an air conditioner could be heard in this place.

"Hm."

Mr. Aso stepped forward without hesitation and took a seat, his legs crossed.

At that very moment, another light slicked on.

A spotlight on the ceiling lit up a place about four metres ahead of Mr. Aso's seat at the desk. Standing under the light was a lone woman. She was young and very beautiful, dressed in a white suit jacket and skirt. She was perhaps in her early twenties. With her tall, slim figure, emerald-green eyes, and short white hair, the woman was most obviously not Japanese. She wasn't smiling, but she wasn't inexpressive. There was a look of confident calculation in her eye--a look of ambition.

Around her neck was an ID card.

On that card was, of course, a photograph of her, grinning and wearing a business suit. Under the picture was a name.

[Chako Kuroshima]

That was her name. There was nothing else on the card save for a barcode, leaving her identity and position a mystery.

"You may begin, Kuroshima." Said Mr. Aso.

"Sir. I will begin with a brief overview of the ones under our surveillance." Chako said in perfect Japanese, lightly bowing to Mr. Aso.



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She snapped her fingers, and a screen popped up in midair, right beside her. Although the mechanics of the device were a mystery, Mr. Aso looked into the screen without even blinking.

On the HD screen was an image of a girl in a sailor uniform sitting at a table.

She had short black hair, large eyes, and a pretty face. In the holster at her waist was a model gun. Several green pouches hung from her belt.

"Ohh..." Mr. Aso vocalized quietly. It was most definitely not because he was looking at a beautiful girl. The reason for his moan was over two hundred pieces of deep-fried dumplings, which were neatly piled up on the table in front of the girl. In each of the girl's hands was a pair of chopsticks. Her eyes were deadly calm, but even through the screen he could feel the pure desire to devour everything.

"This is Subject #1. She is in the fourth year at her institution--a first year high school student. She is registered under the name [Kino]." Chako began to explain. "This photograph was taken inside a certain ramen restaurant in downtown Yokohama one week ago. What you're looking at now, sir, is the subject undertaking a challenge menu, in which anyone who finishes three hundred dumplings within an hour will get their meal free, as well as a five thousand yen cash prize. For your reference, there have only been four successful attempts on this menu in the past five years."

"I see..."

"If you'll turn your attention to the next image."

Chako waved her finger in the air, and the image on the screen changed.

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"Ohh..." Mr. Aso said again.

It was almost like a spot-the-differences game.

The new image was identical to the previous one--the girl's position, her expression, the angle of her chopsticks.

But the dumplings on the table had been cleared out completely.

"This image was taken nineteen minutes later."

"You mean to say that... she finished it all."

"Yes, sir. On average, that means she had eaten one dumpling every 3.8 seconds. Of course, the actual speed was likely higher, as she spent the first few minutes cooling them off."

"Hm... Let me ask you something. This is a very important question..."

"Yes, sir?"

"Did she eat them with pepper oil and vinegar?"

"Yes, sir. But initially she ate them as they were. Reports say that around halfway through she began to add soy sauce, and around the end she accented the flavour with vinegar and pepper oil."

"I see... we have a professional on our hands."

"Yes, sir. The agent who took these photographs was one of my men, disguised as a tourist. He reported, and I quote, 'It was as though I was watching the birth of the universe unfolding before my very eyes. The sheer holiness of the act sent my soul shivering. I do not believe I will be eating dumplings again for some time.' I've also been told that she has already conquered every single challenge menu in the area. Things have gotten to the point where



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restauranters in Yokohama, Kamakura, and Fujisawa are exchanging information about this so-called 'Green Demon'."

"I see. Now that I look at her, she's quite the beauty, don't you think?"

"Please take a look at the next image, sir. This is from a security camera. This was recovered from partially damaged data, so the quality is quite low."

Chako waved her hand again, changing the image.

It was a picture straight out of a war zone.

Most of the screen was obscured by a thick cloud of dust and flying pieces of debris. However, in the middle was the somewhat blurry form of a black-haired girl wearing a green sailor uniform--a girl who looked exactly like the one who had earlier been sitting in front of the table of dumplings. A faint smile graced her lips as she held an M60E4 machine gun towards the right side of the screen with her left arm alone, as though she were aiming a handgun. The flash of light at the end of the barrel and the countless shell casings sparkling in the air were testament to the sheer ferocity of her assault.

"This was the only image captured by the school's security camera, the moment before it was shattered by a demon's claws."

"So this girl... This girl is the transforming hero--*heroine* who restores humans who have fallen to temptation and become demons? 'Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino'?"

"Yes, sir. She can brush off an elephant attack like nothing, support a hundred people with her unusual strength, and possesses a mysterious weapon that can instantly return a demon to human form."

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"Extraordinary. How can she hold a position like that while shooting?"

"We expected no less from you, sir, a former Olympic shooter. Although modified to reduce weight, that is a ten-kilogram machine gun she is wielding, not including the ammunition. Obviously, no normal human is capable of such a feat. We've had a doctor examine the photograph, but he reported no visibly abnormal swelling of the muscles or the like. I believe the most plausible hypothesis is that she is not from this earth."

"Hm."

"I would also like to add that, according to reports, 'Mysterious blah blah blah' is a self-proclaimed title. For convenience's sake, we have shortened it to 'Mysterious Kino'. This is the only extant photograph of her, as civilians are always busy escaping whenever demons--and Mysterious Kino, by extension--appear. Even security cameras tend to be destroyed in the commotion. It's a minor miracle that we even have this one photograph."

"So this girl..." Mr. Aso trailed off, grimacing. Chako, however, smiled satisfactorily.

"Yes. She bears an uncanny resemblance to the girl from the first photograph--Kino."

"Yes. They're almost identical."

"We're keeping a close watch on her, on the off-chance that there is a connection between the two. However, we have yet to find any conclusive evidence."

"Not one? Has no one witnessed a transformation sequence?"



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"No one, sir. We don't even have security footage. Perhaps she takes care to transform in the cameras' blind spots, or perhaps she transforms where the cameras have already been destroyed. Or perhaps she intentionally destroys any cameras in the area after transforming. The only concrete evidence we have is that the girl named Kino was always present at the times and places of Mysterious Kino sightings. Of course, we cannot go by this as conclusive evidence. There is a chance that the two are unrelated individuals, and considering the magnitude of the situation, it would be best to exercise caution."

"Of course."

"That is the end of my report on Mysterious Kino. If you would look to the next slide."

Chako waved her hand, and a new image flickered onto the screen. Mr. Aso's eyes were greeted by a handsome male student in a white standing-collar uniform. This time, it was a video.

The melancholy young man had slightly long, shimmery hair. At his left side was a katana. He was on the sidewalk, presumably on his way to school. Captured on camera behind him were several other students, but their faces were hidden with cartoony blue-and-white smileys. In the background was the sound of passing cars and the chatter of students. The screen was rough, and it shook slightly, giving away the fact that it was likely shot on an old camcorder. Suddenly, a dove flew by across the screen.

"This young man is Shizu, a senior in the same institution as Kino. He is a model student with handsome good looks and excellent academic standing. Naturally, he is rather popular. Female students often refer to him by nicknames like 'The Katana Nobleman' or 'Prince Shizu'." Chako explained.

"I'm quite jealous."

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"Select female students also draw manga starring this young man to sell at Ariake."

"I retract my previous statement."

"Even though the manga are a considerable source of the aforementioned popularity, sir?"

"I'm afraid so. I'm quite content with just playing mahjong in my manga appearances."

Perhaps the camera had run out of tape. The video suddenly stopped as Shizu walked right up to the screen.

"Please keep this student in mind as you view the next piece of footage, sir. It may be quite shocking." Chako said gravely. Mr. Aso shrugged.

"Terrifying."

"This next video features a man we call 'Samoyed Mask'."

"I've been told that the name came from a doodle in one of the classrooms. 'Samoyed Mask Descends!', was it? Something like a movie tagline."

"Yes sir. If you would look at this piece of footage..."

The screen went blank for a moment, and was soon replaced with the face of a smiling man wearing a white mask. This was also a video, but this time, it was of a frighteningly high quality. It was practically something straight out of a nature documentary. There was even excellent audio to match.

"I love lunchtime~ What could it be today~?"



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He was singing. The man in the white school uniform with a katana at his side was singing calmly and joyously.

"Don't get your lunches and benches in bunches~ You might get a tummyache~"

He was an exceedingly accomplished singer.

The man was wearing a white cape over his uniform, and he was wearing a mask that covered his eyes. On his head were a pair of white dog ears, with an apple sitting in between them. The man was sitting at the side of a large river. It seemed that the recording was taken with a high-quality telescopic lens and a powerful microphone.

"Hm..." Mr. Aso said yet again.

"I've heard the rumours, but this man truly is... unusual, Kuroshima."

"Yes, sir. But the problem comes in a bit later. If you would watch carefully, Samoyed Mask will soon open the handkerchief that is wrapped around his boxed lunch."

"Oh? Is he planning a picnic?"

"Yes, sir. We've managed to find out that his boxed lunch was a mackerel pike rice set from a famous local eatery."

The man in the video put the lunchbox on his lap.

"Can't take it no more~ I'mma open it~ I'm really gonna open it~"

The man sang with a smile on his lips, slowly opening the lid. The moment he saw the food in the box, the man put on a look of shock, as though he would break out into a surprised cry.

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He then shouted:

"Whoa! Mackerel! Piiiiiiiike! Rice Seeeeeeet!"

The video cut off there.

The lamp on the desk quietly shed light on the Prime Minister.

"..."

About ten seconds later, Mr. Aso finally spoke up, albeit in a quiet voice.

"I see... I understand that this is no ordinary man we're dealing with. So he is our second target?"

"Yes, sir. We've found sword marks all over the institution, distinct from claw marks caused by demons. The institution's gymnasium, in fact, had already been demolished once. We believe it is all the work of Samoyed Mask. No ordinary human could cut 50-centimetre thick reinforced concrete in a single stroke."

"Hm."

"As for the reason of the sudden cutoff in this video footage, we initially suspected equipment malfunction. However, after sending it in to the manufacturer for repairs, we were told that the cause of the breakage was a toothpick that had been lodged in the camera. We've traced its source to the aforementioned local eatery's lunch sets. For your reference, the filming team was approximately two hundred metres away from Samoyed Mask."

"..."

"Just like Mysterious Kino, Samoyed Mask always appears when demons materialize. We initially suspected that, due to the property damage he causes--even more than the demons, in some



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cases--he might be the mastermind behind the demons. However, we eliminated the possibility after we found signs that he had worked in order to protect Mysterious Kino."

"I see. So that young man--Shizu--would be...?" Mr. Aso asked, circling his index finger in the air.

"Yes, sir." Chako nodded. "There is no one in Japan--no, in the entire world, who resembles Samoyed Mask more than he does. We've gotten an 89% positive match for build, and a 95% positive match for voice sampling. Of course, we still have no conclusive proof. Currently, he is merely a person of interest, just like Kino from earlier."

"Yes. We must be cautious. We cannot afford to make any mistakes."

Chako agreed, then waved her hand again.

"These are our final two subjects."

The screen changed again. This time it was a still photograph of a male student. It was a bust-up picture(Note: A picture of a person from the chest up. Has nothing to do with a subject's chest size), much like those found on identification cards.

The subject was a beautiful young man with shoulder-length white hair, wearing a white shirt. He was staring at Mr. Aso with a bored look that was often found on ID cards and the like.

"Hm? Is this boy a relative of yours, Kuroshima?" Mr. Aso asked.

"No, unfortunately." Chako answered flatly. "But he is a person of interest. His name is Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou."

"Oh! Since my name is Aso Taro, our names match! Although that middle name of his could frankly use a change."

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"He is a classmate of Kino, who transferred to the institution this summer, having moved by himself from Europe."

"You mean the class you've gone undercover into as a teacher this fall?"

"Yes, sir. Other than the fact that he is extremely popular with the female students and that he stubbornly flirts with Kino, he is a normal student. However--"

"Hm."

"If you would take a look at this video, sir."

The screen flickered again. The quality of the recording was very messy, but they managed to make out the scene of a classroom interior. The profile of a young man facing the chalkboard was visible, but just barely. They could tell that he was wearing a black trenchcoat, his long white hair was pulled back into a ponytail, and that he was wearing sunglasses. The man quickly began to write words on the chalkboard with both hands. The quality made it difficult to tell, but it looked like the first word was "Kill".

His movements could not have been human. His two hands, both clutching pieces of chalk, were moving at unbelievable speeds. He repeated the same movements for about three more seconds, at which point the entire chalkboard was covered in words. The recording cut off there.

"We recovered this footage from a cell phone that a student happened to leave behind on his desk at the time of the demon attack. Of course, the footage was deleted from the owner's phone before we returned it to him."

"Is he another possibility, then?"



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"Yes, sir. From the scribbles on the blackboard, which we presume has been written by the young man personally, his name is Detective Wanwan."

"So is this a similar case to that Shizu and Samoyed Mask from before? You believe that these two young men may be the same person?"

"Yes, sir. According to a literary supercomputer analysis, the possibility of Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou being Detective Wanwan is over 89%."

"But still not 100%. You keep repeating that."

Chako nodded quietly.

Mr. Aso slowly got off his seat. He stood up straight, stretching his muscles.

He then spoke, directing his voice into a dark corner of the room.

"I've learned many things upon becoming Prime Minister. But there was nothing more surprising than finding out that 'Multiple individuals from outer space are pretending to be high school students in Yokohama, fighting to protect humankind in secret. All in order to return tempted demons back to human form'. It was all predicted in the ancient document from the Kamakura era."

Mr. Aso was looking into the darkness. It stared back.

"To find that both demons, and extraterrestrials fighting for justice--or, I suppose, people that seem to be extraterrestrials--actually existed..."

"Yes. It has all been recorded in the prophecy."

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"The Japanese Government cannot afford to acknowledge the existence of extraterrestrials. Although my mother always swore up and down that she had seen them in person..."

Mr. Aso trailed off, then finally looked back at Chako.

"How is the demon analysis going?"

Chako shook her head.

"To be frank, we are making absolutely no progress. We hospitalized students who had fallen to demonic temptation but were returned to human form by Mysterious Kino, but we found no abnormalities. In fact, the doctors were shocked to discover that the students had actually been cured of preexisting chronic illnesses or injuries. The monsters created by the demons also dissolve into ashes, making it impossible to investigate them."

"So all we can do at this point is capture those extraterrestrials who fight for us earthlings and question them ourselves... When really, all I'd like to do is reward them for their work. This is quite troubling."

"If we can at least prove that those three students are, indeed, those three persons of interest... If we can somehow make contact while those extraterrestrials, who should not have Japanese citizenship, while they are in their 'student forms', we might be able to find a way."

"How terrifying. We cannot risk instigating an intergalactic war. Try to refrain from using physical force. And before that, would it even be possible for us to defeat them, should they turn against us?"

"I can't say for sure, sir. But we have Kisarazu's 4th Helicopter Brigade on constant standby."



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"We must ensure that we maintain good relations with these three. I am trying to say that we may even have to allow them to act uninterrupted. Continue keeping tabs on them and look for a way to contact them on positive terms."

"Yes, sir. That is all for my report." Chako said, bowing deeply.

"Good work. I'm counting on you." Aso said pleasantly. Chako stood up straight and saluted him.

"Yes, Your Excellency!"

"Please don't call me that."

"My apologies. If you'll excuse me."

The spotlight that was on Chako suddenly flickered out.

Left behind in the dark room was the chair, the desk, the desk lamp, and Mr. Aso. He took a seat again. The chair creaked as he looked into the space where Chako had been up until a few moments ago. Then...

"Phew..."

He breathed out heavily.

"It really is nerve-wracking."

It was a rather strange thing for him to say.

Mr. Aso leaned forward and steepled his fingers, his elbows on the desk. He placed his chin on his hands, and quietly spoke to the space that had just been under the spotlight--where Chako had stood before.

"Kuroshima... The word 'multiple' implies something, you understand? There is another individual we are keeping an eye on."

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He said, taking out a photograph from his suit pocket. illuminated under the lamplight was a girl about twelve years of age. She wore a brown long-sleeved shirt with a round collar and grey shorts that exposed her stick-thin legs. She had short white hair and emotionless emerald-green eyes. In one hand she was holding a Mk 2 grenade.

"Just how many of you are in this country...?" Mr. Aso muttered, looking down at the photograph.

There was no one who could answer his question.



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Chapter 6 - Oh, A Story of Their Meeting ~Ten Days in Japan~

Prologue - In The Rain ~Rain~

Dark, low-hanging clouds,
Naught but rain at the airport,
Through windows she looked,
Yet she saw nothing outside,
No matter how hard she looked.

<=>

It was a certain Sunday afternoon in October.

A girl was lying spread-eagle on her bed in the dormitory.

She was a pretty girl with short black hair and an attractive face.
She wore a pair of light brown cargo pants and a dark green long-sleeved shirt.

Written over her chest on her shirt were the words [?(Are the books selling?)].

Oh! She turned around!



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Embroidered in bold letters onto the back of her shirt were the words [!(Charge!)]. The author has no idea where she buys such devil-may-care shirts.

The dormitory room had nothing but the simplest of furnishings--a desk, a bed, and a closet chief among them.

"I'm bored..."

The girl turned over again, looking up at the ceiling and talking to herself.

It was 1600 hours. In other words, 4 in the afternoon.

It was a little late for a snack, but a little early for dinner. And outside was pouring autumn rain. She couldn't even go out for a walk.

"Two whole hours 'til the cafeteria opens... I'm so bored."

Hanging on a clothes hanger on her closet door was a green sailor uniform (Note: winter uniform), and a western belt, from which hung several (Note: many) small pouches and a holster (Note: containing a single model gun).

They were the only ones there to hear her plight.

"Then why don'tcha sit at your desk and start studying? Isn't your midterm in two weeks?" A voice suddenly asked her. It was a boyish, exasperated voice.

But there was no one but the girl in this room.

There was no one else, not even under the bed, atop the closet, on the balcony, or behind the ceiling.



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The girl, however, was not surprised at all. In fact, her reply was extremely matter-of-fact.

"How am I supposed to study when I don't even have homework? Who do you think I am? Huh?!"

"Don't act so smart when you're actually being dumb."

"That's why I was gonna take a nap, but I'm not tired at all now because I slept in this morning..."

As one of the laziest people in the world, the girl flailed about lightly atop her bed.

She soon got tired of the actions. She plopped her limbs onto her mattress and sighed again.

"I'm bored..."

"Seriously. Just because there hasn't been a demon attack since the rehearsal last week you've lost all your drive, Kino." The mysterious voice said, exasperated.

"That's not why I'm so down, Hermes. That's just not it." The girl called Kino denied the accusation. She glanced over at the cell phone strap lying on the edge of her desk.

The strap had a simple design of green leather and gold-coloured metal ornamentation. It was attached, not to a cell phone, but a key that did not belong to Kino's door.

"Is that so?" The cell phone strap named Hermes replied--my goodness! This cell phone was the one who had been talking to the girl all this time!

"So what's wrong?" He asked expectantly.

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"I'm seeing a lot less of those challenge menus nearby." Kino spat angrily.

"Really?"

Hermes was terribly disappointed. Kino, however, didn't care for his disapproval. She glared up at the darkened fluorescent bulb above her.

"What the heck happened...? After I finished the dumpling challenge, all the eateries around here ended their challenge menus in sync. I went to the library to check the internet, and even places that had challenge menus until just last week stopped them. This can only mean one thing: They're bullying me. There must be some huge organization behind the scenes plotting to stop me from eating. Damn it... I was planning to transform before going out to the next challenge menu, too..."

"That's terrible. You'd run them all out of business."

"*They're* the ones who're challenging me. All I'm doing is accepting. Grandma told me that I don't need to go easy on anyone. 'In combat, there is no mercy'. Human history was built on battle, you know? Wanting to eat as much as possible is just another human instinct." Kino said. "But I really don't wanna pay the round trip fare for the trains just to get to a challenge menu restaurant... That's not feasible, with my puny allowance."

Is she thinking big, or small? It's difficult to tell.

There aren't many high school girls who worry so much about the sudden decline in challenge menus, but one thing is for certain: one such student is right here.



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"Honestly..." Hermes muttered. If he were human, he would have shrugged. Instead, he glanced out the window. (Editorial note: Isn't this rather contradictory?)

It was raining softly.

<=>

As Kino, over in Yokohama in Kanagawa Prefecture, rolled around her bed--

It was raining in Narita International Airport (Narita Airport), in Narita, Chiba Prefecture.

Until the year 2004, Japan's foremost gateway into the skies was officially called [New Tokyo International Airport].

I'm sure you all remember--even in the Edo Period this had been the butt of jokes like "Why is it 'Tokyo International Airport' if it's in Chiba?". Even [REDACTEDland] is in Chiba, but for some reason it's called [Tokyo DisREDACTED]. People from Chiba should be more open to complaining.

Narita Airport has two terminals, each used by different airline companies.

You don't need to worry too much if you're just landing, but you'll be in big trouble if you go into the wrong terminal for departure. Please remember this if you've never used the Narita Airport before.

It was in the Immigrations area for Terminal #1 of Narita Airport that the girl standing at the front of the line for foreign nationals stepped forward.

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She was a white girl with emerald-green eyes. Her blond hair reached down to her waist.

Caucasians tend to look more mature than Asians, but the girl was probably in her mid-teens. She wasn't very tall. She was also dressed comfortably in a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt.

With an American passport, the girl walked towards the gate and handed the male immigrations officer her passport and other documents.

With a quick fingerprint check and a photograph, the officer quickly glanced over the girl's passport. He spoke to her in plain English, his face stoic and businesslike.

[Are you here on vacation?]

(In this story, any dialogue in [bracket]s is spoken in English.)

The girl smiled and replied in a slightly high-pitched but lovely voice. Of course, it was in English.

[Nope. I'm here to fight.]

[Pardon me?] The officer asked, taken aback.

The girl seemed to be a little surprised.

[Oh? You mean you've never watched such a popular anime?]

[...]

The officer gaped silently. The girl tilted her head.

[But I could have sworn I heard that all Japanese people love anime...]

The officer:



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[...]

Put on a very serious face. He then said:

[Setting aside whether or not all Japanese people love anime, Miss-]

Immigrations is a place that is critical to matters of national security. It is where people like terrorists, spies, illegal immigrants, and drug dealers are weeded out and stopped from entering the country.

So it's no wonder that an immigration official was about to scold this girl for acting this way in such a sacred place. This should be good.

[I've seen that one. It's practically the Bible of my youth. I remember I went to the Kawasaki theatre to watch it the day it came to the big screen. It's a historic work of art.]

Hey.

[Right? Wasn't it a masterpiece?] The girl smiled.

[The cityscapes of Tokyo were beautiful enough, but that story! That script was a work of perfection. I still remember the shock of realizing that the first scene was foreshadowing the final scene.]

The officer abandoned his duties to engage in otaku talk. Someone stop these two.

Starting off with the robot police anime that led to this conversation, the two moved on to discussing an anime about weaponized dolls (because they're both feature films), to a recent hit series about a rebelling prince who likes to show off one of his eyes. The large white man in an I <3 New York sweatshirt, who

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was waiting in line after the girl, began to impatiently look down at his wristwatch as they continued their merry anime chatter.

After enough time for a bowl of instant ramen to boil over and get soggy--

[My, my. Looks like we'll have to stop here. Anyway, you said you were here for short-term study, correct? There you are.]

Having finally come back to his senses, the officer stamped the girl's passport.

[Welcome to E**ven!] He smiled.

Thank you very much for that terribly problematic comment.

[Thank you.] The girl replied, taking her passport. And as she stepped forward into Japan--

[Please don't fire guns like crazy like they did in that anime.] The officer said jokingly. This guy needs to get it through his head.

The girl turned back towards him and grinned.

[I won't. I don't even have any guns with me, anyway.]

[Good to hear. Enjoy your stay in Japan!]

[Thank you!]

And so, she arrived in Japan.

Once the girl stepped out of the gate, the large man in the sweatshirt came to the desk.



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Five people behind him in the line that had just gotten a little bit shorter was a bored-looking man in a black suit, fiddling with a Blackberry. He sent someone a text message.

[The rabbit has entered Japan.]

[Narration: Kino]

Ever have one of those nights when you just wanna fire away like no tomorrow?

Ever imagine targets shaped like the faces of people you know?

If you're looking for that unforgettable loading problem and that unchainable recoil...

Open that case of 12-gauge slugs!

An introduction to the characters of this story:

Kino

A female student in her fourth year at the academy. (Equivalent to her first year of high school)

No matter what anyone might tell you, she is the main character of this story. No more, no less. The name 'Kino' seems to be her family name, but why does even her grandmother call her that? Not even the author knows.

With a holstered model gun and a belt with pouches full of live firearms around her sailor uniform, she is a perfectly ordinary

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student attending a secondary school in Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture.

Transforming into the warrior of justice, 'Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino', she fights day and night against demons--students who have fallen to the temptation of evil--that attack the schools, all in order to turn them back into human form. She is accompanied by Hermes, the talking cell phone strap.

Favourite words:

- 'All-you-can-eat buffet' (Kino)

- 'All-you-can-eat buffet', 'Samoyed Mask is not appearing in this chapter' (Mysterious Kino)

Hermes

A mysterious talking cell phone strap.

It's not known where his mouth and eyes are. He is a guide of sorts to Kino, having given her the power to transform and combat demons.

Because he is this work's only sane man (only sane cell phone strap), he is giving the author a great deal of grief because he can't do very much in a story filled with crazies. He's more or less given up on Hermes.

Hermes sometimes transforms into a motorcycle to assist Kino, but currently his abilities are limited to use in battle.

Favourite words:

- 'Awareness of being a warrior of justice'

Shizu



GAKUEN KINO

A male student in his sixth year at the academy. (Equivalent to his third year of high school)

The top student in his year--a handsome and popular young man who always carries a sword at his side.

Although it looks like he is a distant figure that bows to no one, maybe he just doesn't have any friends. Although he has nothing in common with his underclassman Kino, they often find themselves sharing tender moments together.

But unbeknownst to all is his true identity as the warrior of justice known as 'Samoyed Mask'. Thanks to his constant interruptions during Kino's battles with the demons, he has earned himself a place at the top of her To-Kill-List. These days he gets a bullet to the face within two pages of his appearance before Kino, but he always escapes unscathed by use of his sword or tomatoes.

His greatest weakness is Ti. Every time he sees her, he is struck by a great wave of agony that paralyzes him on the spot. His fear of her seems to be rooted in some traumatic past event, but the specifics of the incident are unknown. Hey, you! I can see you laugh, you know.

Favourite words:

- 'I will not hesitate to give my life in the name of justice.' (Shizu)

- 'I will not hesitate to do problematic things in the name of justice.' (Samoyed Mask)

Samoyed Mask

See: Shizu

Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou

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A classmate of Kino. He is a beautiful boy with long, soft white hair. He is quite popular with the girls, although not as much as Shizu.

Thanks to his unrelenting stalker-like behaviour towards Kino, Inuyama has earned more hatred from her than the hypothetical mortal enemy of her parents. He also shows a great deal of hostility towards Shizu, but his reasons are a mystery. Forever.

Chako-sensei is very fond of Inuyama, often hugging him from behind and putting her chin on his head.

Favourite words:
-'Defeat Shizu'

Detective Wanwan

A mysterious white-haired boy in black clothes and sunglasses who fights using the Septuple-Gun Fist Style, a dangerous martial art that involves dual-wielding guns while evading bullets. He looks quite familiar.

When fighting demons, he assists Kino in targeting Samoyed Mask. Kino sees him as someone very reliable. Sometimes the background becomes sparkly when they're together.

Ti seems to be very fond of Detective Wanwan. Once she gets a hold of him from behind, he is rendered powerless.

Favourite words:
-'Defeat Samoyed Mask'

Kuroshima Chako



GAKUEN KINO

An English teacher in her early twenties who suddenly stepped in during the second term. She is a stylish, mature woman with white hair and emerald-green eyes. She is very popular with the students.

For some reason, she is extremely fond of Inuyama and has a tendency to hug him from behind and rest her chin on his head.

Favourite words:

- 'Get along, everyone!'

Ti

A stoic and silent girl who appears on the battlefield out of nowhere. She looks to be about twelve years old, and has white hair and emerald-green eyes. She effortlessly throws around Mk 2 grenades (the type used by the US military). Demons are no match for her.

It seems like she has some sort of history with Samoyed Mask.

For some reason, she is extremely fond of Detective Wanwan and has a tendency to hug him from behind and rest her chin on his head.

Favourite words:

- Unknown, as she is nearly silent.

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Chapter 6 - Part 1: She Comes to School ~Escaper~

It was a certain Monday in October.

The day after Kino rolled around her bed with nothing to do.

Yesterday's rain was still here, but even stronger than before. It sounds like the autumn rain front is trying its hardest today.

As a side note, I don't understand why military terminology like "Front" is acceptable for terms like "warm front", but words like "Guerilla" in "Guerilla rains" aren't allowed because of their military connection. Is it because I'm a military otaku? Is it because I'm a Pisces? Or is it because I'm no good at English?

Setting that aside, the students seemed to be tired of the rain that had lasted all weekend. They sat in their seats, faces darker than the cloudy sky, annoyed by their wet socks and sleeves.

Sitting in her new seat for this term, at the back of the classroom beside the hallway, Kino absently waited for homeroom with her chin on her desk.

"I'm bored..." Kino complained quietly. Just like the other students, Kino was wearing a winter version of her sailor uniform. Around her waist was a belt from which hung several pouches and a holster. Hermes hung from the other side.

At the worst seat in the classroom, the middle seat at the front row, sat a certain male student.

He was a young man with white hair.

Who is this boy? Please don't tell me you've forgotten!



GAKUEN KINO

This is Kino's oblivious stalker-material classmate of Kino, Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou!

But for some reason, ever since last month's [Allison] rehearsal, Inuyama had gone quiet. Even when he met Kino he just greeted her quietly, not following her anywhere.

That was one of the reasons why Kino was so bored, but because of a bunch of complicated teenager-y stubborn psychological blah blah blah, Kino did not even understand this about herself.

The class bell rang.

Normlly, their 70-plus homeroom teacher would hobble into the classroom on the dot, say "Good morning, everyone", and start the period, but today was different. He did come on time, but two other people followed him inside.

"Good morning, everyone. There's someone I'd like to introduce to you today."

His opening sentence was a little longer than usual, too. The students began murmuring.

One of the two people who had stepped into the class was a very familiar face--their English teacher, Kuroshima Chako-sensei. She was a woman with short white hair and emerald-green eyes. Stylish as always, she sported a black business suit and skirt. The picture of sexiness.

Surprisingly enough, the second person was a blonde girl.

She had long hair, pale skin, and green eyes. Obviously the students had no idea that she was the very girl who had the anime conversation with the immigrations officer in Narita Airport yesterday.

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She was dressed in a uniform from a different school. She wore a black and red checkered skirt that covered her knees and wore a neatly-tied red necktie. On her navy jacket was an inhumanly complicated school crest, embroidered in gold thread. On her feet she wore white socks and red indoor shoes. It was a look straight out of some trendy foreign film.

'She's cute!' The boys thought.

'Wow! She looks like a doll!' The girls thought.

Kino, being Kino, thought, *'What's a foreigner doing in our class?'*. But then she glanced over at Chako-sensei.

"I'll not intercede in this matter." Kino muttered, as though she was someone from a historical drama.

"Now, everyone. Let me introduce our new classmate."

The students's eyes at once moved from the girl to the teacher.

The teacher, wishing that his students would give him this much attention in class, began.

"This is Miss Smith, who's just arrived from the U.S. yesterday. She will be studying with our class for about two weeks. Since she can't speak Japanese, Kuroshima-sensei will be interpreting for her."

'Oh, I see.' The students understood at once. Chako-sensei interpreted the homeroom teacher's introduction to the girl.

"I'll let Kuroshima-sensei take over now. If you will, Kuroshima-sensei."

The homeroom teacher handed the reins to Kuroshima-sensei. She took charge.



GAKUEN KINO

"My name is Kuroshima Chako."

'We all know that!' The students thought in unison, looking up at Chako-sensei.

"Miss Smith here will be studying here in our class for the next two weeks."

'This isn't your class.' The students thought, astonished.

"Short-term study periods like this aren't so common these days."

'Right. Don't most people stay for at least a year?' The students wondered.

"I can't divulge the details, but Miss Smith's father is the CEO of a huge corporation. Don't tell anyone that he *donated* a huge sum of money to this institution in exchange for allowing his only daughter this stay."

'Adults.' The students thought dryly.

"Anyway, we might not have too much time together, but get along, everyone!" Chako-sensei concluded with a smile. She looked over at Kino, sitting at the back of the class.

"Kino! I'm going to assign you to be Miss Smith's guide while she's here!"

"Whaaaaaat?!" Kino screamed, getting off her seat. Chako-sensei took advantage of the situation and spoke to the newcomer in English.

[See that girl over there? The one who just got up with all that enthusiasm? Her name's Kino, and she'll be your guide around

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class! She's a bit of a big eater, but she's a kind and gentle girl, I promise!]

[Thank you so much, Miss Kuroshima. I'm very grateful.]

Though Kino couldn't understand a word of their English, that was all the more reason for Kino to complain.

"W-wait a second! I can't speak English!"

"I know, Kino. If I remember correctly, you translated the phrase 'Pay per view' as 'a paper airplane (going *vieeewwwwwww*)' on your last quiz."

"Then leave it to someone-"

"That's why I had a wonderful idea!"

It seemed like Chako-sensei had no intention of listening to Kino. This time, she looked down at Inuyama, sitting right in front of the podium.

"That's why Inuyama here will follow you two and take care of interpreting! As long as you're together, [No Problem]!"

"Whaaaaaat?!" Kino cried again.

"If you say so, Kuroshima-sensei." Inuyama, on the other hand, accepted her orders with grace.

"Wh-why is everything-"

'Why is everything going so fast?' It's amazing how Chako-sensei never gives Kino a chance to finish her sentences. She quickly turned to the new student.



GAKUEN KINO

[There we go. Kino says she's happy to be your guide. This boy here is Inuyama. He'll be interpreting for you and Kino. Come over here, Inuyama! Say hello!]

Inuyama got off his seat and spoke to the newcomer in fluent English.

[My name is Inuyama Wanwan Rikutarou. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Welcome to Japan, and welcome to our class.]

As the other students broke out into cries of astonished admiration, Kino stood there in shock.

The girl smiled at Inuyama.

[The pleasure's all mine. Thank you in advance for all your help.]

[It's no trouble.]

After the conversation:

"That's enough now." Chako-sensei made to leave the classroom, leaving the slack-jawed Kino standing at her desk. She suddenly stopped.

"Oh, right! I forgot to tell you her name!" Chako-sensei exclaimed, and instructed the new student to introduce herself.

[Of course! Hello, everyone!]

She was obviously speaking English, but anyone can understand words like "Hello" and "Everyone". Hmph! The other students greeted her with [Hello]s and [Hi]s and [Konnichiwa]s.

Although it wasn't a very eloquent exchange, even minuscule amounts of comprehension is generally enough to raise people's

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cheer. The girl smiled. The satisfaction was infectious--the rest of the class seemed content as well. Kino was still standing.

And so the girl--

[My name is--]

Introduced herself to the class.

[Inid. My name is Inid Smith. It's nice to meet you.]

"Inid?"

"Inid."

"Inid, huh?"

The students whispered. Energetic answers like "Nice to meet you!" and "Hi there!" and "Welcome!" were returned to Inid.

"Say, can you speak any Japanese?" One girl asked, in Japanese. Inuyama instantly interpreted for her.

Hearing Inuyama's translation, Inid excitedly clasped her hands together in front of her chest.

[Yes! I've learned a few Japanese phrases from some of my favourite anime series!]

Inuyama interpreted for her again. From this point on, please assume that any communication between Inid and the class takes place through Inuyama.

"Really? Which one?" The girl from earlier asked, thrilled. Inid responded with a radiant smile of her own. This was only natural, as she finally got a chance to use the Japanese she worked so hard to learn.



GAKUEN KINO

The class looked at her, enraptured.

Suddenly, Inid balled up her hands into fists and pointed to the sky, scaring the students.

She took a deep breath, then stated in confident Japanese:

"I'm going to become King of the Pirates!"

This is how Inid came to study in Kino's class.

The beautiful blonde from across the sea instantly became the hottest topic in school. During break time, the classroom was filled with curious students from elsewhere, here to get a glimpse of Inid.

Inid took classes normally, with Inuyama interpreting for her on the spot. But she could not help but be curious about something during Chako-sensei's English class.

[Kuroshima-sensei, may I ask a question?]

[What is it?]

[Why do you have Inuyama's seat turned around? Why are you resting your chin on his head?]

[That's a very good question! It's because this is the rule in Japan when it comes to foreign language classes.]

[A rule?]

[That's right. Students take turns being the teacher's chin-rest for a month each. Inuyama is stationed here all October.]

[But Inuyama doesn't look so happy about it...]

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[Maybe, but rules are rules. This is a very strict law, you see, descended from the era of samurai. Anyone who goes against it has to slit his own belly. It's called seppuku.]

[What strange traditions Japan has...]

[You got that right. But remember that saying, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do'.] Chako-sensei said casually. Inuyama remained silent. This is a pretty well-known English saying, but this is foreshadowing.

[Of course. I'll remember that.] Inid nodded. Ignorance can sometimes be terrifying.

Kino and her fellow classmates had no idea what they were saying, but they knew very well that Chako-sensei must have been talking nonsense again.

About ten minutes before the end of class, Chako-sensei put down her chalk.

Without a care in the world, she returned to her perch atop Inuyama's head, as he continued to silently read a depressing-looking book called [The Era of Reven(ge)]. Chako-sensei looked over at Inid.

[Have you spoken with Kino yet?]

[I'm afraid not. Everyone else was just being so nice to me, so...]

[I see. Then I'll end the lesson here. Why don't you take Kino and Inuyama over to the school cafeteria? No offence to America, but all Japanese food is delicious! And they're low in calories, too! Especially the ones at our school.]



GAKUEN KINO

That was how the lesson came to an end. With the formalities dispensed ("Try not to disturb the other classes"), the students were let off to enjoy some free time.

Inid heeded Chako-sensei's advice. Gently turning down the other students, she crossed the classroom and approached Kino.

"If I leave now I can have my pick of today's menu..." Kino mumbled, as she made to leave the classroom.

[Could you please show me around the cafeteria, Kino?] A smiling Inid asked her through Inuyama.

Kino thought for a moment, and answered with a groan.

"I guess so."

Although she wasn't too happy to be with Inuyama, Kino could not complain because she couldn't speak English.

"Let's go."

[Thank you, Kino!]

With this, the two girls and their interpreter walked through the hallway, switched out of their indoor shoes, and stepped outside the building. They headed for the dormitory cafeteria, which was not too far away.

Kino held a black umbrella, Inuyama a green one, and Inid an orange one. A trio of umbrellas, all of different sizes and colours, trod forth.

[Kuroshima-sensei seems to trust you a lot, Kino.] Inid said.

"Huh. You think so? I thought she picked on me because I'm in the Take Action Now Club." Kino answered. It was irritating to have to

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hear Inuyama's voice each time she said anything, but there was nothing she could do about it.

[Oh? What is the Take Action Now Club?]

"Kinda hard to explain, but... I guess it's a club Chako-sensei made so we can all have fun together."

[That's amazing! Could I join, too?]

"Huh? What?"

[Chako-sensei told me, "If you like being around Kino and Inuyama, you should join their club"!]

"Huh. Seriously?"

Kino was taken aback. Things were getting more annoying than she had expected.

'Looks like she won't be saying "I'm bored" again anytime soon.'
Hermes thought as he hung from her belt, but he did not voice this thought.

The cafeteria soon came into sight.

"Our cafeteria has some really good food. If we go there now we could probably pick whatever we want off the menu."

[That's amazing! You know, I learned the phrase Japanese people say before a meal by watching anime.]

"Really? What is it?" Kino asked. Hearing Inuyama's translation, Inid spoke confidently.

"Who's the bastard who made this sashimi?!"



GAKUEN KINO

Inside the cafeteria.

In front of Kino was a shogayaki¹ rice set (Of course, she had an extra-extra-extra supersized serving of rice. She also had a small plate overflowing with kyurizuke², topped with a generous helping of sesame seeds for an accentuated zing). In front of Inid was a tempura udon with egg (udon with crisp, freshly fried tempura containing bright orange shrimp), a dish she had always wanted to try in Japan. Inuyama had a bowl of curry rice (a staple of school cafeterias, with a liberal serving of potatoes and carrots). They sat side-by-side at one table.

"Let's eat, everyone! Thanks for the meal!"

With Kino's declaration, their lunch began.

Let's show off everyone's characters: Kino ate enthusiastically, but retained a cool composure throughout her meal. Inid carefully manoeuvred her chopsticks around her udon noodles. Inuyama ate in silence, not mixing the curry into the rice very much.

Other than the mysterious Japanese phrases she tossed around confidently once in a while, Inid was rather easy for Kino to talk to.

"So you're staying at a hotel while you're in Japan, huh?"

[That's right. I actually wanted to try a homestay in a Japanese home, but this study trip was so sudden that we couldn't manage that.]

¹ Shogayaki: Ginger stir-fry

² Kyurizuke: Pickled cucumbers (redundancy much?)

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Hearing that Inid was staying at a hotel in Yokohama Landmark Tower (Note: As of 2009, the tallest building in Japan. Located on the Yokohama beach area), Kino was not very impressed.

"There's a hotel in that building?"

Kino would go crazy over something like a lunch buffet in Yokohama's Chinatown, but she didn't seem to have any interest in tall buildings.

Inid was staying in a Royal Suite that costs over five hundred thousand yen per night. The suite, which included two bedrooms, a living room, and a dining room, was about three hundred metres square. If the classroom was eight metres by ten, then it was about a third of the size of Inid's suite.

She had checked in to the hotel yesterday, along with her personal maid (who used the smaller bedroom in the suite), her retainer-cum-butler (in a different suite), and a group of sharp-eyed macho bodyguards keeping a watchful eye all around the floor. But since she didn't really have any need to say anything about this, Inid refrained from mentioning it.

And though it was a rather poor idea of a substitution, she smiled radiantly and said, [This tempura udon is delicious.]

As they drank tea after finishing their meals, Inid suddenly asked Kino and Inuyama a question.

[Come to think of it, I've seen a lot of posters with slogans around the school. What's that all about?]

She was talking about the PSAs warning students about demonic temptation.



GAKUEN KINO

Kino decided that, if nothing else, Inid had to know about the facts regarding the matter of demons. She explained everything from the start.

Kino explained that, sometimes, students succumbed to the follies of their youth and become rampaging demons. She explained that, in case of such an occurrence, students should follow instructions and leave the area in an orderly fashion.

Kino also explained that Inid should never fall for any suspicious temptations--in other words, she should refrain from answering "yes" to just anything.

And finally, she explained that, in the worst-case scenario, where a demon materializes (or where Inid herself becomes a demon), she should not worry, as a warrior of justice will appear out of nowhere and solve the problem by shooting a mysterious gun.

Of course, the fact that Kino was the aforementioned warrior of justice, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino, was a secret among secrets.

Inid's eyes widened as she listened to Kino's explanation.

[My goodness... demons that take advantage of weak human hearts, a transforming hero of justice, and a mysterious gun that turns the demons back to humans... Japan is really something!]

Although it was difficult to tell from her words if Inid was impressed or disbelieving, the sparkle in her green eyes probably meant the former.

It was after school. The rain had gotten lighter.

Although it wasn't such a bad thing for Kino and Inid,

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"Yaaaay! We have a new member! I'm sorry, everyone. I was just so busy for the past little while that I just couldn't find the time to recommence club activities! But that's all in the past now! For the next two weeks, we are going to do stuff like no tomorrow! Who do you want to do club stuff with? Me? Or me? Looks like I have no choice. Oh my! I'm much too popular for my own good!"

It was a surprise to see an overexcited Chako-sensei hopping in place, restarting the Take Action Now Club's activities.

Today, they were using the biology room. Last time they were in the library, but it was nothing new for the Take Action Now Club for their clubroom to change every meeting.

Chako-sensei stood at the podium. Kino, Inid, and Inuyama sat in a row at the desk at the very front.

"Sorry about the long break! I was really busy, you know? To be specific, I was called in by someone really high up in the government! I got to talk with Prime Minister Aso about Japan's future!" Chako-sensei said embarrassedly. At least no one who was listening to her took her seriously. Even though she was telling nothing but the truth.

Suddenly,

"I'm sorry I'm late. I was held up at a career counselling meeting."

The door slid open and an upperclassman stepped into the classroom.

He was a male student in his sixth year, wearing a flattering white standing-collar uniform. We finally get to see Shizu.

He had slightly long black hair and handsome features. He was tall and carried himself with exquisite posture, and carried a katana at



GAKUEN KINO

his side. Look! A dove is flying across [Rest omitted]. As a side note, there is only one student in this school who carries around a sword. One student is more than enough.

"Oh! Right on time, Shizu. Come on in!" Chako-sensei called, beckoning Shizu to her side. She then introduced him to Inid, and Inid to him. In English, of course.

Shizu spoke up.

[It's very nice to meet you, Miss Smith. My name is Shizu. I humbly welcome you to Japan, our school, and the Take Action Now Club. It may be a short time, but I hope you enjoy your stay.]

[Thank you. Please, call me Inid. You know, I'm surprised that everyone can speak English so well.] Inid replied.

And as she listened to the gibberish that went on between them, Kino began complaining under her breath.

"What... so am I the only one here who doesn't speak English?"

And so Kino made a vow. From tomorrow on, she would work hard in studying English. She would go above and beyond the calling of school-issued English lessons and learn conversational English, so that she could at least carry on a conversation with little trouble in the future.

"Hey. I'm not making a vow like that. Okay? It's not like I'll be going abroad by myself, anyway. Guided tours all the way!"

I see.

But you know, knowing a foreign language is very useful for eating delicious foreign cuisine. You might be introduced to a cheap but delicious restaurant, the likes of which would never be introduced in guided tours.

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"M-maybe... Maybe I could study... a little."

Right?

"I-it's not like I'm doing this for food, okay?"

Right, right.

"Look over this way, Kino! Who are you talking to? Now, about our triumphant return to club activities next week..."

Chako-sensei led the proceedings in Japanese so that Kino could understand. Inuyama continued to act as a fluent interpreter. If you think he looks even more stoic than he did before Shizu arrived, it must be your imagination.

"Since Inid came all this way to Japan, how about we introduce her to some wonderful things about our country? We'll go on a tour of famous Japanese places nearby, time permitting."

'What's going on, Chako-sensei? You're talking like a normal person. Did you eat something funny?' Kino thought, but she remained quiet.

"We only have two weeks, so there's no time to lose."

'Our midterms are in two weeks. Is this really all right?' Kino thought, but she remained quiet. After all, it wasn't as though she studied very much before a test.

[Is there anywhere you'd like to go, Inid? Don't be shy, just name it!]

[Yes!] Inid replied enthusiastically. [I'm really interested in Japanese history. Kyoto might be too far for us, but I'd like to look around Kamakura.]



GAKUEN KINO

[That's a wonderful idea! Kamakura is just one big boat ride away. It gets crowded, so we could even go by car. We'll leave tomorrow straight after class. Where else?]

[I'd like to visit Tokyo, if that's possible.]

[Then that's where we'll go this weekend. Is there anywhere in Tokyo you'd really like to go? Somewhere you want to visit first?]

[Yes, I do!] Inid replied energetically.

[Really? Where? The Imperial Palace? Ginza? Shinjuku? Harajuku? Shibuya? Ikebukuro? Asakusa? Tsukishima? Chichijima?]

Chako-sensei rattled off a list of locations. Some of these places would be difficult to visit in one day, even if they were in Tokyo, but Inid shook her head.

[I'd like to go to Akihabara!]

Kino was listening to Chako-sensei and Inid's conversation through Inuyama.

[Then everyone will go to the places you want to see, Inid! No objections allowed!]

Kino finally reacted.

"Chako-sensei, I have a question. Does 'everyone' include me?"

"Of course, Kino. You're one of our members. End of story."

"But I can't speak English like the rest of you, and I don't know much about Kamakura since I'm not from there. Could I just not go this time? I feel like I'm just going to be in the way."

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"Really? Well, that's too bad. I guess I can't drag you by force, seeing as midterms are coming up."

'Huh? She's backing off pretty easily. Maybe I'll actually get a break this time.' Kino thought, swelling with hope.

"It's a shame, really. I was going to take us to all kinds of amazing restaurants. I'm paying with club funds, so you could eat as much as you wanted. But if you can't come this time, then-"

"I'll go! I'm a member, Chako-sensei! Don't leave me behind!" Kino yelled and raised her hand before Chako-sensei could even finish. Inid, sitting beside her, looked a little spooked.

"All right! It's decided, then!"

Hermes could not believe this was happening, but he kept his mouth shut. Then...

'No! It can't be! ...Is this why all the local challenge menus have suddenly died off? Could it be a trap to lure Kino onto their turf?' He thought for a moment. But...

'Maybe I'm just thinking too hard.' Hermes thought to himself. *'I must be paranoid. Who would go so far for Kino?'*

You still lack in training, Hermes.

They ended off the day's club activities once they had decided on a course of action. It was still raining outside.

Kino asked Inid how she was going to get back.

[My ride's probably here already.] She answered.



GAKUEN KINO

Kino and Inuyama walked Inid to the school gates, and there was indeed a car waiting for her beyond the iron bars.

It was a Lexus LS600hL. A top-class car among Japanese models, costing about fifteen million yen. For your reference, it was a hybrid car that ran on the combined power of a fuel engine and an electric motor.

hybrid: a word also denoting an organism of mixed descent. This English lesson was brought to you by Gakuen Kino Volume 3.

The presence of a car so luxurious naturally spooked the students, who visibly walked around it as much as they could.

When Inid approached the school gates, a black man wearing a black suit and sunglasses stepped out of the car. He was her bodyguard, a mass of muscle rivalling the kind of guy you'd find firing machine guns in the Marines.

The man approached Inid, opened a large umbrella, and beckoned her towards him.

Inid did as she was told, and quickly introduced Kino and Inuyama to her bodyguard. The man looked at them and spoke in fluent Japanese.

"Thank you both. If you'll excuse us, the young lady will have to leave."

It really is amazing.

Surprised, Kino greeted him quickly. She then turned to Inid, saying goodbye to her with what little English she knew.

"I'll see you tomorrow. Uh. Let's see... *Shii yuu toumoro!*"

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Inid smiled, waved, and answered with what little Japanese she knew.

"If you're leaving, *rerere no re!*"

I could point out a million things wrong with what she just said. But I won't.

<=>

It was the next day. The day after Monday, so Tuesday.

The rain did not let up, but it had weakened somewhat. The weather report said that it would stop in the afternoon.

Inid energetically came to school today, too. During breaktimes, she enjoyed fun conversations with the class, with Inuyama's help. She was practically a celebrity.

Lunchtime.

Inid headed to the cafeteria with Kino. The weather was perfect, with the blue sky peeking in through the clouds and the temperature being neither too hot nor too cold. For once the weatherman got it right.

[This is delicious! It's perfect!]

As Inid savoured her hashed beef with rice (full of thin slices of beef and the delicate sweetness of onions), Kino couldn't help but look a bit proud.

Soon, classes had ended.



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"That's all for today, everyone. Get home safe."

Just as homeroom ended with the teacher's greeting, the door slid open.

"She's here!"

Chako-sensei, dressed in a suit, intruded into Kino, Inuyama, and Inid's class. Shizu was standing beside her.

"Take Action Now Club, commence activities! We're going to Kamakura, so prepare yourself!"

Kino, Inuyama, and Inid were practically kidnapped as Chako-sensei dragged them to the parking lot in front of the school. Parked there was a minivan. A shiny new Honda Odyssey.

Chako-sensei approached the car. The doors unlocked by themselves.

"Say hello to my loyal steed. Get in, now!"

"Is this your car, sensei?" Kino asked. Chako-sensei grinned.

"It was pretty expensive, you know? I took out a loan and everything!"

The letter "わ" on the license plate said otherwise. This was obviously a rental car³. Chako-sensei is a big fat liar.

But setting all that aside, the four students climbed on board, still in their school uniforms. In the driver's seat was Chako-sensei,

³ Apparently, in Japan, only rental cars have the character わ on their license plates.

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with Shizu sitting beside her. In the middle row sat Kino and Inid, with Inuyama sitting in the back.

"Is everyone wearing their seatbelts? Don't think you can get away with not wearing one if you're in the back. Don't underestimate the G, now! We're off!"

Chako-sensei started the car.

Surprisingly, despite her personality, Chako-sensei was not the kind of driver who slammed the gas pedal and challenged innocent drivers at five consecutive hairpin turns. In fact, she drove calmly and reasonably--the very picture of a model driver.

A short drive later, they arrived in front of the Great Buddha statue in Kamakura.

The temple was officially called "Kotoku-In", but no one ever called it that. Most people said, "Great Buddha of Kamaukua" or "Great Buddha of Hase".

After parking in the pay parking lot, they entered the temple (Entrance fee: 200 yen).

Unlike the one in Nara, the Great Buddha in Kamakura had no altar. It was just lying outside. Please don't call it a hobo--it's both misleading and practically asking for divine punishment. Maybe we should just call it an outdoorsman?

Inid excitedly snapped pictures on her digital camera, and asked Chako-sensei and Shizu about the history of the temple. Of course, not much was known about this temple and the statue, so there wasn't much they could answer.



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Another 20-yen entrance fee later, they entered the Great Buddha statue. That's right. You can enter the interior of the Kamakura Buddha.

They descended a series of dark, narrow stairs and observed the interior. Statues like this were made by building the frame from the bottom and pouring in copper, then adding to the frame and repeating the procedure. The process was easy to see from the inside.

As they continued their visit, Chako-sensei took snapshots of the club members with her oft-mentioned Nikon digital single-lens reflex camera. Shizu commented on its amazing specs.

"I bought it on credit just so I could record our club in action." Chako-sensei replied.

Actually, she's borrowing it from the government. Please don't forget to return it later.

The Take Action Now Club left Kotoku-In, satisfied.

"Well now, Shall we go and buy ourselves an Excalibur?"

They followed the unfathomable Chako-sensei into a gift shop before them.

This shop was called "Kamakura Arms", an emporium that only die-hard fanatics knew about. Displayed alongside the perfectly average souvenirs were a veritable storehouse of model swords and replicas of European blades. You'd better have steeled yourself before stepping in, or you're in for quite the shock.

[Oh my gosh...]

As Inid looked on in fascination, Chako-sensei began a serious explanation.

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[This is the first store that heroes and adventurers visit when they come to Kamakura. They equip themselves here before going out to hunt monsters.]

[I see... So that's why there are so many weapons here.]

[That's right. Kamakura is an ancient city, so we still have monster invasions every now and then. Stores like this are essential to survival.]

[I understand...] Inid breathed. Get a hold of yourself, kid! You're being fooled!

Inid took some time to look at the disorganized mess that was the store. After a moment spent admiring the beautiful coloured papers on the ceiling, she found a decorative musket replica that was stationed rather high up.

Inid seemed to be quite taken. A curious Kino asked through Inuyama why Inid was so fixated on the musket.

[I think my ancestors must have used weapons like that.]

"Huh? What do you mean?" Kino asked, rather confident in her knowledge of guns.

[My ancestors come from England. One of them was a privateer who took part in the battle against the Spanish Armada in Queen Elizabeth's day.]

Kino decided to answer vaguely, not being too familiar with any sort of history.

"Oh... I see. Right."



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It was impossible to tell if she knew anything from her answer. Of course, the rest of us know that Kino really has no idea.

To put simply, a privateer is a type of pirate who has been granted permission by the government to plunder from ships belonging to enemy countries. In other words, they're licensed pirates. They did their pillaging and gave a percentage of their earnings to the government or their sponsor.

In 1588 (Two years before the Battle of Sekihara), the English Navy defeated the Spanish Armada. This was one of the chief causes of Spain's eventual loss of power.

The man who essentially led the English Navy in this battle was a privateer named Francis Drake. This is why some people say that pirates helped England win.

I might end up writing an entire short story at this rate, so let's stop here.

If you're curious to know more, look it up at the library or on the internet. And if there are any factual inaccuracies in the above content, that is entirely the author's fault. I apologize in advance.

In the end, Inid bought the store's most popular souvenirs--crackers bearing the words "I've been to Kamakura", a T-Shirt with a picture of a warrior and the word "Kamakura" printed on it, a ninja headband for make-believe games (a headband with a metal plate on it), and several cute miniature Buddha mascots.

She actually really, really, really wanted to buy a replica of the reverse-bladed sword used by a certain anime/manga character, but she had to swallow her tears and give up for fear of being scolded by her butler if she brought it back to the hotel.

[Don't worry. I'll send it to you later.] Chako-sensei promised her.

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As Inid was paying for her purchase--

"Whoa!"

Kino suddenly stopped petting the cat on the counter and turned around, glaring at the door that led into the street. Her hand reached for the pouches on her belt.

Standing by the door were three white men wearing sunglasses, excitedly checking out some souvenirs. They looked to be nothing more than tourists.

They put the keychains they were looking at back on the stand.

[We're going to Kamakura Station next, right? Do we take the bus?]

[Nah, there's a small subway station we can walk to.]

The men spoke in English, then left.

"Why are you making such a scary face, Kino? Did you see someone suspicious?" Chako-sensei asked, confused. She was wearing a ninja headband with the word "Pass!" written on it and holding Excalibur--all items she had just bought.

"No, it's nothing..." Kino replied, taking her hand off her pouch.

"Oh? All right, then." Chako-sensei said, and walked away from Kino with Excalibur in hand. You're the most suspicious one here, sensei.

"That's strange... I could've sworn I sensed bloodlust..." Kino tilted her head.

"..."



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Hermes said nothing as he shook from Kino's belt.

Having stowed the wooden swords and other purchases from the shop in the car, the Take Action Now club walked a little further.

The street leading from the Great Buddha to Hase Station on the Enoden line is lined with stores.

With Chako-sensei's permission, Kino used club funds to eat as much as she wanted. Inid's eyes turned to dinner plates as Kino giddily downed ice cream, croquettes, mochi, and manju along the way.

After their food-filled walk, they arrived at Hase-dera (formally known as Kaikozan Jishoin Hase-dera. They say that the statue of Kannon is over nine metres tall).

After a good look around the temple, they headed for the terrace, which was there because Hase-dera is a temple on a rather high plateau.

From the terrace they could see the azure sky dotted with white clouds, and the blue waters past the Yuigahama Sea. Inid's golden hair fluttered in the pleasant breeze.

[So this is the Pacific Ocean. I'm going to tell my family all about it when I get home.] Inid said, having only ever seen the Atlantic. With her digital camera, she took pictures of Kino and Inuyama, and asked Chako-sensei to take pictures of her with the others.

Shizu watched them from a slight distance with a smile on his face.

"Hm?"



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He suddenly put his left hand on the scabbard of his katana and turned around. His right hand also reached for the sword. He was ready to draw at a moment's notice.

In front of the main temple were countless tourists. Men and women, young and old, Japanese people and foreigners, photographers and people being photographed.

It was a peaceful sight. He could see nothing suspicious about it.

"Was it just my imagination? I know I felt a great deal of bloodlust just now..." Shizu muttered, and took his hand off the scabbard.



GAKUEN KINO

Chapter 6 - Part 2: The Take Action Now Club Never Sleeps ~After School~

The next day. In other words, Wednesday. For once it was sunny all morning.

Morning classes went as usual, lunch went as usual, and afternoon classes went as usual.

And a single second later:

"Club activity time! I'm giving you forty seconds to get ready!"

Once again, the bubbly Chako-sensei burst into Kino's class. Was she even capable of getting tired?

"Ugh..."

Kino,

"Understood."

Inuyama,

"I shall give you three minutes!"

And Inid stood from their seats.

Kino and the four members of their club again piled into the Odyssey, still in their uniforms. Today's destination: Kitakamakura. In other words, the station right after Kamakura Station. Of course, it's further north.

First, they visited Kencho-ji, which ranks first among Kamakura's Five Great Zen Temples. After a stroll around its vast grounds, they looked at the gates and the alters.

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Kino was apathetic, but Inid was thrilled. They listened to Shizu's expert explanations about the history of the temple. In the end Inid bought a black T-Shirt with the character "喝" printed over the chest.

Next, they visited the second of the Great Temples, Engaku-ji. This temple was erected to appease the souls of those who had fallen during the Mongolian invasion, ally and enemy alike.

Part of the Yokosuka subway line crossed through the temple grounds. It made for an outlandish sight, where there was a railway crossing right across the bridge into the temple.

It was almost evening now, but since they were already here, they couldn't just pass up the opportunity to visit the Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu.

As it is the biggest and most famous shrine in Kamakura, known to all, on New Year's day there are more people here than there is garbage at a landfill. (Editorial note: Please refrain using from problematic metaphors)

Doves are considered sacred in this place. The character "八" of "鶴岡八幡宮" (Hachiman-gu) is even drawn with a pair of doves representing the character.

It's a perfect place for Shizu. Several doves flew across him as he stood quietly in front of the *Maiden*⁴, and flew off into the sunset skies.

The pigeon motif was used to create one of Kamakura's finest products, the Hato-Sable. It's a perfect dessert for Kino, but she'd

⁴ According to Wikipedia, *Maiden* is a type of pavilion.



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already bought a whole lot of them with the club's budget before I could even start writing that.

"Wai aut? Ao-enei aed I can."

(Translation: "Why not? Chako-sensei said I can.")

Please either eat or speak. Don't do both at the same time.

<=>

The next day. It was Thursday.

It was the day the author presented the results of a survey asking people about the difficulty of memorizing the names of the week in English. Three of the author's acquaintances who were surveyed unanimously agreed that Thursday was it. You can never deny the power of 100%.

It's pronounced Thursday, not *Saasudei*. It's spelt with a "u", not an "e". This English lesson was brought to you by Gakuen Kino Volume 3.

It was pouring rain today all morning. The school was battered by gale-force winds. The sound of raindrops hitting the windows almost drowned out the teachers' voices.

Second period today was English. As usual, Chako-sensei was teaching the students with her chin on Inuyama's head.

"In other words, the phrase 'remind ____ of ____' means, 'evoke the image of something to someone'. In this case, after the 'of'--"

Chako-sensei suddenly stopped and looked out the window.

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"Hey, about Take Action Now Club's activities... I don't think we can do anything today." She suddenly started talking about her own club. This is what they normally call neglecting one's duties. With this weather, even Inid said that her ride would come to pick her up straight after school, as her butler had instructed.

[Then I guess we'll take a break for today after all. You must be tired from having fun day and night, too, Inid. Think of today as a holiday and get some rest.]

Inid never actually had fun at night. Whenever she went back to the hotel, her butler helped her with her studies.

Setting that aside, today's club activities were suspended. Once Kino, Inuyama, and Inid agreed, Chako-sensei asked her a question.

[Anyway, I'd like to ask you something important, Inid. I want you to tell me honestly.]

[Yes? What is it?]

There was a look of utmost seriousness in Chako-sensei's eyes.

[Is your butler's name is Sebastian? Or is he actually named 'Sebas' and you add a 'chan' as a friendly honorific? Or is he actually a Chinese guy named Sebas Chan?]

'Shut up and get back to teaching!' The students thought to themselves.

<=>



GAKUEN KINO

The next day was Friday. It was cloudy.

Classes ended normally, setting the students free on time.

"I LOVE THE SEA!" Chako-sensei cried. Today, the members of the Take Action Now Club were indulging her by going to the beach.

Their destination was the city of Fujisawa, west of Kamakura. Of course, most people know it better as Enoshima or the Shonan Dunes. The weather was blah, but they couldn't do much about that.

Chako-sensei drove on Route 134. They passed by Yuigahama, Inamuragasaki (famous for Nitta Yoshisada's attack on Kamakura), drove along the Enoshima subway line as they looked towards Enoshima in front of Shichirigahama, passed Koyurugimisaki (where Osamu Dazai tried to commit a lover's suicide but only his lady friend died), crossed the bridge, and finally arrived on the island.

After parking and paying, the Take Action Now Club walked around the island. They visited the Enoshima Shrine, took the escalator up the mountain, visited the lighthouse (and its gorgeous 360-degree views), saw the boulders on the other side of the island, and all the cats roaming free around the streets.

[This place is beautiful. I'm so glad I got to come...] Inid breathed, hands clasped in front of her chest.

I am convinced that Inid's wonder at seeing this place is because she is thinking of the countless travellers who had set foot here in the Edo period. She's probably not like this because she's thinking of an anime about a giant robot or an anime about three girls who stop alien invasions, which were both set in this very location. At least, I hope to god this isn't the case.

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After looking around Enoshima, they frolicked in the waves and enjoyed the Shonan Dunes. They then headed for Enoshima Station and went shopping.

On the ride back home--

[I've never seen a train-shaped pillow before.]

Inid was clutching a train-shaped cushion, purchased with the club's budget. Sitting beside her was Kino.

"Wai aut? Ao-enei aed I can."

(Translation: "Why not? Chako-sensei said I can.")

She was eating a train-shaped *monaka*⁵ that, of course, she had bought with the club's budget.

They were on their way back to school, slowly making their way through traffic in the evening rush hour.

"What are we going to be doing tomorrow?" Shizu asked Chako-sensei.

"I dunno..." Chako-sensei replied. The car happened to be stopped at a red light. She turned around and asked Inid for her opinion.

[Do you think we can go to Tokyo tomorrow?]

[Actually, I received a text message just now. It looks like I have to meet with the American ambassador's family at the hotel tomorrow morning. But I'm okay with Sunday.]

⁵ A Japanese sweet. It's two pieces of mochi wafers sandwiching a jam filling.



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[Then tomorrow, we'll start our club activities in the afternoon. Is there anywhere nearby you want to visit?]

[Yes!] Inid replied at once.

[Oh? Where?]

[I'd like to go to a hot spring!]

<=>

The next day was a Saturday. Once again, rain greeted them in the morning.

Although the school was closed today, Kino ate lunch in the cafeteria.

It was a little before 2:30.

"Well, it *is* a club activity..."

She took an umbrella (The words "Not secretly a SPAS-12" were written in the corner) and stepped outside. Today, Kino wore a plain pair of jeans and a hoodie. Written over her chest were the words "'64 Model bolts look similar front and back". Where does she get clothes like (Rest omitted). Maybe in Asaka?

She was carrying only a single beige bag. She wore her belt, just like she did when in uniform. Hermes hung from it as he usually did.

Kino left the dorms and headed for the school gates. Chako-sensei must be waiting there with the Odyssey.

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After a short walk in the rain--

"This is the life. No demons, no real club activities, plenty of delicious food, and Inuyama is quiet because he's interpreting." Kino said to Hermes.

"Yeah, but I'm dying of boredom. If nothing happens today, I'm just going to go to sleep." He complained. This was his first line in a long time, but that's all for Hermes this time.

"You can't just sleep all the time. If you've got nothing to do, go study at your desk or something." Kino said. But Hermes was silent, either sleeping or ignoring her.

Soon Kino arrived at the gates. The Odyssey was already there, with Chako-sensei (wearing chino pants and a light sweater), Inuyama (wearing his uniform even though it was Saturday), and Shizu (again, wearing his uniform and carrying his katana) already inside. Kino opened the door, folded her umbrella, and fastened her seatbelt.

"Chako, taking off! I have control!"

Chako-sensei, energetic as usual, hit the gas and drove safely.

After driving through downtown Yokohama, they reached neither Landmark Tower nor a hot spring, but the parking lot of a recently-opened shopping mall.

At the furthest corner of the crowded parking lot was a familiar Lexus. Chako-sensei parked the Odyssey beside it.

As the bodyguard stepped out of the car, not caring that he was getting drenched, the doors on both cars opened. Inid, wearing a



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one-piece dress, slid out of the Lexus and into the Odyssey. It almost looked like they were exchanging suspicious goods.

"Huh...?"

Kino tilted her head in confusion. Why was everyone being so cautious? It was as if they were expecting to be attacked.

But--

"We're off to the hot springs! After the baths, we'll take a relaxing rest at a cafe. What should we have for dessert? Ice cream? Juice? Or both, if you want!"

Chako-sensei's excited words helped her forget her confusion.

The Odyssey drove through the rain and arrived at a place called "Health Land". Of course, this was the hot spring.

It was a rainy Saturday, which naturally had to mean that parking would be a nightmare, but for some reason, it was empty. It was not long before Kino found out why. When the Odyssey drove up to the building, they saw a note posted on the automatic doors.

[Health Land is closed today for maintenance. We apologize for the inconvenience.]

"Huh?"

Kino stepped out of the Odyssey and frowned. Inid stepped out after her.

[What does it say?]

But before Kino could answer--

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[It says, 'Hot Springs rented out by the Take Action Now Club'. I pulled a few strings here and there.] Chako-sensei answered.

"Huh? Why?" Kino asked.

"Don't sweat the details, Kino!" Chako-sensei said, and stepped in front of the doors. They slid open. Soon, someone greeted them. He looked to be the owner of the hot springs.

"Miss Kuroshima Chako, correct? We've been waiting for you."

The man bowed and led them away. It didn't seem like he was going to ask them to pay. What was going on? Kino was confused.

"I'm glad to see that we have the hot springs to ourselves." Inuyama didn't seem to be bothered at all.

"It will be a relaxing bath, I'm sure." Shizu didn't seem to care, either.

[It's wonderful that we rented out the place all day!] Inid was, of course, as carefree as everyone else. Actually, no one seemed to think this was strange in the least. So Kino followed their example.

"Huh."

She stopped sweating the details and stepped into the building.

They were in the hot springs.

I'll do my best to describe them well, for men and women both.

"Wow, it's huge!"



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Kino was the first to step out of the changing room and enter the hot springs area, where there were several baths lined up in a row. She had left Hermes back in the change room locker.

Witness now the warrior of justice's slender body, her **~unnatural steam~**, and her **~unnatural steam~**!

(Note: The **~unnatural steam~** that will appear frequently from this point on will be removed in the DVD versions!)

[Amazing! So this is a hot spring... What large baths! It reminds me of Rome!]

Inid followed after Kino, in awe of her surroundings.

Her long blond hair was neatly tied up. Exposed to the air were her long, slim legs, **~unnatural steam~**, and **~unnatural steam~**. Her **~unnatural steam~** were quite perky, as expected from a caucasian.

Seeing this, Kino especially stared at her **~unnatural steam~**, tore her eyes away, looked down at her own **~unnatural steam~**, and--

"Gah...! Caucasians...! So this is the natural limit! The difference of DNA!" She mumbled angrily.

"Yaay! Hot springs! Baths! Let's all count to a hundred, now! Un, deux, trois!"

Chako-sensei broke out into a strange song. And obviously, Inuyama and Shizu were in the men's baths. This isn't the Edo period, you know.

Chako-sensei was indeed a mature woman. The curves of her **~unnatural steam~** leading naturally to her **~unnatural steam~** were quite different from those of her students.

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Her ~unnatural steam~ shook each time she took a step. Between her thin legs ~unnatural steam~, and ~unnatural steam~ were ~unnatural steam~.

Inid and Chako-sensei were smiling, with ~unnatural steam~ and ~unnatural steam~ with ~unnatural steam~ and ~unnatural steam~.

"Now then, let me show you how the Japanese bathe!"

Chako-sensei began to use Kino as an example of how to properly enter a bath.

First, one should lightly soak themselves in warm water before entering the hot springs, or shower if need be. One has to tie up their hair so it would not get wet. One was not to wear a towel inside the hot spring. One was to be cautious of overheating. And finally, once finished with the hot spring, one was to put one hand on their hip and drink a bottle of milk with the other hand.

[Oh! I see... Yes.]

Inid gave Chako-sensei her full attention. Although she didn't really see the difference between drinking coffee milk or fruit milk at the end.

First, they slipped into the biggest of the baths--the normal one. The towels on their heads were snazzy and truly of the Japanese style.

Not long afterwards,

[We're off to the hot springs next!]



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Shaking off the moisture from their **~unnatural steam~**, they headed for one of the hot springs proper.

[Um... This is... a hot spring?]

[That's right.]

Inid was looking down at a black hot spring, a common sight in the Yokohama area. The water was dark, like coffee or ink or crude oil.

[Uhhh...]

Inid was hesitant to enter the creepy-coloured water.

"Show her how it's done, Kino!" Chako-sensei pressured Kino.

"Right."

Kino stepped into the hot spring without a moment's hesitation.

Stuff like her body melting, being dyed black, or being dragged into the depths by a suspicious creature did not happen.

"Ah... This feels nice."

Spurred by Kino's relaxed example, Inid tentatively stepped into the water. Once she realized that the water in this hot spring felt completely different from that in the bath, a smile came over her face.

As a sexy teacher, a beautiful blonde, and another person were enjoying the hot springs at the exclusive hot spring facility--

"Do you need some help washing your back, senpai?"

"I'd appreciate that."

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Inuyama and Shizu were in the men's bath. Naked. They were sitting in a row by the water taps.

Shizu had agreed quite easily. As they were in a hot spring, Shizu was not carrying the katana he always had at his side. Terrible things can happen if you bring one into a hot spring, you know.

In other words, Shizu was completely unarmed. Inuyama's eyes glinted suspiciously as he stepped behind Shizu's back.

He lathered body wash onto the towel and began washing Shizu's muscled back, not at all questionably.

"..."

Shizu sat there, relaxed. But--

'Damn!'

Inuyama was overcome by doubt. The moment Shizu showed even a hint of weakness, he would have thrown the towel around his neck and strangled him on the spot.

"..."

There was no opening.

Even in his naked state, Shizu was far from defenceless. In his head, Inuyama began to go over possible simulations for defeating Shizu.

Plan A:

Throw the towel around Shizu's neck -> Shizu hears the rustling and notices my plot, putting his right hand between the towel and his neck -> Shizu looks back and elbows me in the face with his left arm -> Defeat



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Looks like that won't work. Next.

Plan B:

Hit him over the head with a bucket -> Shizu notices it and blocks with his hands -> Shizu spins and kicks me in the side with a spinning left kick. -> Defeat

This one's no good, either. Another?

Plan C:

Pull out Shizu's chair from under him -> Shizu uses the momentum and lands a spinning kick on my face -> Can't defend, holding a chair -> Defeat.

Another bad one. What about this?

Plan D:

Embrace him from behind without warning and yell "I love you!" to take him by surprise -> Shizu is not so easily surprised. He notices the bloodlust in my confession and hits my head with the back of his head -> Since our heads are practically touching, I can't defend myself. Nosebleed and blood loss ensues -> Defeat.

'Damn!'

In the end, Inuyama could not find a way to win. He thoroughly washed Shizu's back and poured out the water from the bucket. He really couldn't do anything but wash his back and return to his own seat.

"Thank you. Would you like some help as well?" Shizu said condescendingly (Note: Inuyama-vision).

"No thank you!"

"Oh?"

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"If you'll excuse me!"

Inuyama stood up, walked through *~unnatural steam~*, splashed into the furthest--and hottest--bath, and lowered himself into the water all the way up to his mouth.

"Blubblubblubblubblub! Blub! Blubblub!
Blubblubblubblubblubblubblubblubblub!"

It sounded like he was saying something under the water, but it just sounded like bubbles. It was impossible to tell what he was saying.

'Damn it! Damn it! Am I never going to be able to defeat him?!'

As he desperately swallowed his resentment, droplets of water ran down Inuyama's face. It must be sweat.

Drrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

Sitting in a 100-yen-per-round massage chair and receiving a rhythmical shoulder rub was Chako-sensei.

[We're going to Akihabara tomorrow, right? Just trust me. Ohhhh, right there. A little more. We'll all leave in the morning. Right there. Yeah.]

She turned to Inid, who was also getting a massage from a chair beside hers.

[Of course! But... Will it be all right?] A shadow was cast over her face. For your reference, Kino was drinking cream soda in the cafeteria. In other words, she was not here.

[There's no need to worry. We'll be right there with you.] Chako-sensei smiled.



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She then added:

[Have faith in the Take Action Now Club.]

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Chapter 6 - Part 3: Holiday in Akiba ~Akiba's Holiday~

Sunday.

The skies were clear since morning--it was a beautiful autumn day.

"Hah... I don't really feel like it, but I have to remember what this is for..."

Despite her grumblings, Kino left the dormitories with time to spare so she wouldn't be late. It was a little past nine in the morning.

Today, Kino was wearing jeans and a thin green fleece jacket. On the back of the jacket was written the words 'Plastic bombs will not detonate even when burned'. No one has any idea what this outfit was made for.

As usual, around her waist was her belt. Hermes was swinging from it.

"But at least you're not bored, right?"

"Huh? I guess."

Kino tilted her head, but she looked quite happy.

Today's meeting place was Sakuragi-cho Station. This was simply because it is the station closest to Yokohama Landmark Tower. Sakuragi-cho is one station south along the JR Negi line from Yokohama Station⁶.

⁶ The original text actually says it's two stations south, but it's mentioned in an author's note in a later volume that this was a mistake. As I am not planning to translate Sigsawa's author's notes, I decided to make the correction here.



GAKUEN KINO

For your information, I said way back in volume 1 that Kino took the JR Keihin Tohoku line, but it turns out that it was the Negi line that runs between Yokohama and Oofuna. I was confused by the fact that the Keihin Tohoku line and the Negi line practically run together between Oomiya and Yokohama. Let me take this moment to give you my sincerest apologies.

The meeting time was 9:53. Chako-sensei had chosen this time instead of 10:00, because some people tend to subconsciously permit themselves to be a few minutes late if the meeting time is at a round number.

You know someone who's always someone like that, right? The kind of person who's always unapologetically ten or fifteen minutes late to every get-together. In this person's head, 'Let's meet at 10' translates to 'I can come by 10:15'.

That's why a specific number like 9:53 compels people to come early.

The train Kino was on pulled into the station. She descended the stairs and arrived at the turnstiles, only to see that she was the last one there.

"We're all here! Let's go!"

Chako-sensei was dressed in a black business jacket and a miniskirt. She was energetic as always, but even on a Sunday she was dressed like a teacher.

"Hello, Kino."

Does he have no change of clothing? Shizu greeted Kino, wearing his white school uniform with a katana strapped to the side of his belt. And the dove, too.

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"Hi."

Inuyama was wearing dark blue pants, a white shirt, and a cream-coloured cardigan. He was, again, unusually downcast. Actually he looked even worse than he did yesterday.

And finally,

"Morning~!"

Inid was there, wearing jeans, a plain green parka, a New York Yankees cap over her head, and a pair of Ray-Ban sunglasses over her eyes.

She had tied her blond hair into a ponytail and slipped it out the back of her baseball cap. Being caucasian, Inid would stand out anywhere in Japan--but with this outfit, she could have a relatively easier time blending in, since many Japanese people these days dye their hair blonde.

Chako-sensei was the one who had suggested this outfit. Foreigners in Akihabara were nothing new these days, but Inid was so eye-catchingly beautiful that Chako-sensei had stopped her from going out in her uniform with her face exposed in order to protect her from being photographed by random passers-by.

The Take Action Now Club took the tickets Chako-sensei bought with her Suica card and walked through the turnstiles.

"What about the rest of my travel costs?"

"Don't worry, Kino. I'll make sure to reimburse you later."

You're such a cheapskate, Kino.

Their destination today was Akihabara.



GAKUEN KINO

By subway, the fastest route would be to switch to the Tokaido line at Yokohama Station, but this was a little annoying because they would have to transfer at both Yokohama and Tokyo (the end of the Tokaido line).

By chance, all five of them managed to find seats at Sakuragi-cho Station. They decided to continue on the Negi line to the Keihin Tohoku line. It would take them a little more time, but it would be less of a bother.

About fifty minutes passed as they looked out the windows or talked about Japan. During that period of time, the train passed Yokohama and Kawasaki, entered the Tokyo area, passed the Shinagawa, Shin-bashi, and Tokyo Stations. After the next station--Kanda--they finally arrived at Akihabara.

Akihabara is located right between Tokyo Station and Ueno Station, in the same Chiyoda district that the Imperial Palace is located in.

It is said that, in the past, this place was called Akibagahara (or 'Akibahara', or 'Akibahhara', written "秋葉原"). The name 'Akihabara' stuck because the cargo station that had been built here was called as such.

As you may already know, this place is also affectionately known as 'Akiba'.

That's why people who don't know much about Tokyo's geography mistakenly call this place 'Akibahara', but as I mentioned earlier, this isn't entirely incorrect. In fact, it's actually closer to the original name for this place.

As a side note, if you misspell the end of the word 'Akiba', you get the name of an anime heroine. Tanks don't take baths.

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Akihabara slowly transformed itself from an electronics district to an Otaku zone, but the Tsukuba Express line (Nicknamed the TX Line, like something out of a Terminator movie) opened up along the station in 2005, bringing with it a wave of redevelopment.

Huge electronics stores and high-rises were constructed along the streets, and normal people who had never set foot into Akihabara began to visit. So the streets of chaos known as Akiba had plunged further into an even more frenetic mess that couldn't be explained in just one sentence.

Stepping on anime characters, the Take Action Now Club walked through the turnstiles and stepped out to the front of the station. Girls dressed up as maids were handing out flyers for nearby Maid Cafes.

[Kuroshima-sensei! There are maids here!] Inid's eyes glinted from underneath her obscuring sunglasses.

"Weirdos." Kino said with plain disdain.

Inid's Holiday in Akiba (Not her Holiday in Rome) would be an unforgettable day.

Her golden ponytail shook as she explored the crowded Sunday streets of Akihabara.

She asked Chako-sensei to take a picture of her with one of the maids handing out flyers.

She waited in line so she could drink tea at a maid cafe.

She explored the toy building from top to bottom.



GAKUEN KINO

She widened her eyes at the canned oden and canned ramen noodles she saw at a vending machine.

She concentrated in excited terror as she attempted to win a figurine at a crane catcher game.

She almost stepped into an adult store by mistake before Chako-sensei stopped her.

[Sensei! Can we go look at anime merch next?]

[Of course! Let's head over to _____!]

[Okay!]

Inid was happy. She was in her own personal heaven.

Kino's Holiday in Akiba (Not her Holiday in Rome) would be an unforgettable day.

Her holster shook as she explored the crowded Sunday streets of Akihabara.

She discovered a place selling doner kebab sandwiches and excitedly downed several of them.

She waited in line so she could eat at a famous ramen restaurant by herself.

She flustered the maid by asking if there was a challenge menu at the maid cafe.

She conquered the canned oden and canned ramen noodles at the vending machine.

She won a mountain of chocolate at a crane catcher game.

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"Sensei! Can I try the authentic Indian curry over there? With the club budget?"

"Of course! Don't forget to get a receipt for the school!"

"Okay!"

Kino was very very happy. She was in *rakuen*.⁷

Chako-sensei grinned.

"Looking good, girls! Okay, look over this way! Perfect. Oh... Yes! You get the best picture when you shoot against the sun, you know... Now, wanna take that off for a little bit?" She asked, snapping pictures left and right.

As for the other members, AKA Shizu and Inuyama--

Shizu was walking through an alleyway, several paces behind Inid and Kino, when a pair of uniformed officers suddenly approached him.

"Young man, we'd like to conduct a quick check of your belongings."

So this is one of those spot checks I'd heard so much about. Shizu, who had turned to face the officers, told the others to go ahead without him.

⁷ *Rakuen*, of course, is Japanese for paradise. I stuck with the Japanese here to preserve the contrast between Inid the American's presence in heaven with Kino the Japanese.



GAKUEN KINO

"Of course. It's the duty of all law-abiding citizens to cooperate with the police, after all." He answered confidently. The officers asked him to take out everything in his pockets.

Shizu obeyed and took out keys, a wallet, and a handkerchief. Everyday possessions if there ever were.

In the end, they found nothing dangerous in his pockets. The spot check was over in less than a minute.

"Sorry for taking up your time, young man. We've been having some trouble these days with young people carrying around knives for what they'd call self-defence."

With that, the officers were gone.

"To think that lawful and just swordsmen would be inconvenienced so by fools who don't know how to wield a blade..." Shizu sighed, watching the officers walk away.

He adjusted the katana strapped to his belt as he followed after the others.

Inuyama, meanwhile--

He followed after the others from a great distance, his footsteps heaviest out of every one of the club members. However, he was suddenly interrupted.

"Hey, punk. Got a sec?"

A trio of delinquent young men were surrounding him.

People who were out shopping would naturally come carrying cash. These delinquents were probably muggers after such people, and

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were also known as 'Otaku Hunters'. For your reference, mugging is a crime punishable by at least five years in prison.

Once the trio had Inuyama surrounded--

"Let's talk for a bit. Come here."

They tried to take Inuyama somewhere where their crime would not be witnessed.

"..."

Inuyama nodded obediently and followed them in silence. The four young men quickly marched around a corner and towards the back of a multipurpose apartment complex. At a glance they looked like little more than a quartet of close friends.

Once they were securely behind the deserted building, one of the three delinquents began their practiced routine.

"Hand over all your--"

'Hand over all your cash' was what he planned to say, but he could not even finish his sentence. Inuyama would not allow him.

Still lost in despair over being unable to kill Shizu last time, Inuyama's psyche was not prepared for forgiveness. He leapt into the air high above the trio and spun around once with his legs in the air. In less than a second all three delinquents were hit with a spinning kick to the jaw.

"Gah...!"

"Ugh!"

"Aaaah...!"



GAKUEN KINO

The kick itself was nothing special, but the sudden shock to their heads resulted in concussions as the three delinquents fell to the ground like the petals of a flower in bloom.

Inuyama effortlessly landed on the ground in the middle of the three.

"Defeat Shizu..." He mumbled, his fangs bared.

Inuyama then turned the corner and followed the others by tracking their scents.

It was almost evening.

As Inid and Kino enjoyed their holiday in Akihabara, a pair of men watched them from afar.

They were Japanese men in their thirties, dressed in dark blue suits. One of them was wearing black horn-rimmed glasses, and the other had very short hair.

At first glance they looked like office workers running around doing their job, even though it was a Sunday. They each carried a single black bag.

Actually, these two men had been following Inid and the others from a distance of about 50 metres, ever since they came out to the station front.

Whenever the Take Action Now Club went inside a store, one of the men would stubbornly watch the exit. Once Inid and the others left, the man would report to the other and they would continue the pursuit as a duo. They had been doing this since morning.

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As they watched Inid and the others eating ice cream from afar, the bespectacled man tossed out a tired comment to his coworker.

"What's with those people...? They look like they're on vacation, but they're not leaving a single blind spot. We have to be careful, or we'll get found out in an instant."

"This is impossible." The short-haired man replied.

"You got that right. What kind of idiot planned this out, anyway? There's no way we can pull off the plan in this crowd. Those Americans have no idea that Akihabara is one of the best-policed streets these days. 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do', right? You gotta take this stuff into account. Why didn't they at least hand over the planning to us?"

The bespectacled man's complaints knew no end.

Inid and the others finished their ice cream and set off again, but the two men did not follow them anymore.

The short-haired man took out a cell phone and called someone. After a three-minute conversation, he hung up and began walking.

"We've just received permission," He said to the bespectacled man, who was walking beside him, "They're leaving it to us. The operation commences at the school tomorrow. The higher-ups are serious about this."

"Understood. What's our plan of attack? The students are going to be in the way, and cleaning up after them is going to be a lot harder than killing them."

The short-haired man, who had been rather expressionless so far, suddenly grinned.



GAKUEN KINO

"I hear they sometimes get demon attacks at the school. We just have to make use of the opportunities they present."

"That would be great... except how are we supposed to time our plan to one of those?" The bespectacled man tilted his head.

"Who says there has to be a *real* demon attack?" The short-haired man smirked.

"Right."

Afterwards, the men took a cab and told the driver the name of a skyscraper in Marunouchi.

As the cab departed, the two men opened their cases.

They then took out a single bullet from the magazine of an MP5K submachine gun from Heckler and Koch, modified so that they could be shot without being removed from their cases.

<=>

Monday.

It was yet another sunny day, but the wind was rather strong.

It had been exactly a week since Inid's arrival.

[I had so much fun yesterday, Kino!]

"Me too! I had a really good haul for food yesterday!"

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Their pre-homeroom conversation (via Inuyama, obviously) was interrupted by the bell. Inid reluctantly returned to her seat.

"Good morning, everyone." The homeroom teacher said, and began to go over the day's announcements.

"I needed a break like that. The past week was a blast." Kino whispered to Hermes.

"All you did was relax. What about your job? Warrior of justice, hello?"

"What am I supposed to do? There weren't any demons around, anyway. Oh man, this isn't good. At this rate I'll get rusty." Kino said confidently.

"Really, Kino."

Hermes sighed.

Don't worry. Today there will be a demon attack.

It was at the start of today's sixth and final period--

A pair of white station wagons slowly pulled into the school grounds. On their roofs were folding ladders, and on the sides of the vehicles were logos for [OX Electric Company], along with long-distance phone numbers for the city of Yokohama.

At a glance they looked like nothing more than ordinary electricians' cars. However, the rear windows were all tinted pitch black and the wheels were made of run-flat tires, which allowed cars to continue driving even if the tires had gone flat.



GAKUEN KINO

The two station wagons stopped a slight distance from the visitors' parking area. A pair of men in work wear stepped out of one of them.

They were Japanese. In fact, they were the bespectacled man and the short-haired man who were at Akihabara only the day before.

Upon closer inspection, flesh-coloured earbuds were sticking out of their ears. The wires led into their pockets. There was an unusual bulge under their clothes, just under their armpits. They were probably armed with small handguns.

As students were still in class, the men stepped into the quiet building and headed for the office-slash-sign-in desk. The glass door was closed, so they pressed the call button. Ten seconds passed.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

A middle-aged woman wearing a nametag identifying her only as 'Saume' stepped out and opened the glass door.

The two men paid the name no mind.

"Please excuse us. We're here for a regular inspection." The bespectacled man said with a smile, taking off his hat.

"My goodness, thank you so much for your hard work."

The trusting Ms. Saume didn't even check to see if such an inspection was actually scheduled.

"If you would please write the name of your supervisor and your phone number here, please." She said, pushing towards them a binder.

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Clipped inside the binder was a piece of paper titled 'Visitor Sign-In Sheet'. There were two layers of paper, and anything written on the top page would also be imprinted onto the second page. There were no other names on the sheet yet.

The bespectacled man wrote down his name and phone number--naturally, they were a pseudonym and the fake number printed on the side of the car.

"There you are." He said, putting down the pen and handing the binder back to Ms. Saume.

Ms. Saume flipped over the first page, making sure that the name had been printed onto the second page, and nodded satisfactorily.

She quietly looked up at the two men and smiled pleasantly.

"Ha. Enjoy yourselves."

With that, Ms. Saume vanished right before their eyes. It was as though she had evaporated. The binder fell onto the counter with a flat *clack*.

"Huh...?"

"Hm...?"

The men stood in confusion for a good three seconds.

Finally, the short-haired man hesitantly reached out towards the binder.

He began with a quick glance at the first page. He then flipped over to the second page.

In the blank at the top of the page were written the words: 'Demon Sign-up Sheet! If you would like to become a demon, please note



GAKUEN KINO

down your name and phone number. We accept pseudonyms as well!'.

Looks like we finally have the demon for this story. You let your guard down, men. No student would fall for such an obvious trick these days.

"..."

As the short-haired man stood rooted to the spot in shock, he began to hear the sound of his coworker's clothing ripping apart from the inside out.

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Chapter 6 - Part 4: Battle Start ~Rock'n'Roll~

[A demon has appeared on the school grounds. We ask that all students and staff exit the building in a calm and orderly fashion. The demon is currently rampaging in the vicinity of the first floor main entrance. Please use the east and west staircases, and exit through the gymnasium or the new wing. This is not a drill. I repeat-]

It had been a long time since the students in their classrooms had heard this alarm and the emergency broadcast.

"It's been a while, huh?"

"What kind of idiot still falls for one of those? It's almost time for midterms!"

"The school rules say that if there's less than half a class remaining when a demon attacks, they cancel the rest of the day's lesson."

"Sweet! No makeup classes!"

"I was just about to go to sleep, too..."

The students chattered blissfully, neither panicked nor worried, and began to evacuate the building in an orderly fashion just as they were directed.

Kino's class was no different. Everyone stood from their seats and began the evacuation procedures.

[What's going on here? Oh! Could it be...?] Inid wondered. Inuyama answered her.



GAKUEN KINO

[That's correct. There is a demon running loose. But please stay calm. We'll evacuate onto the school grounds with the others.]

[R, right...]

Inid didn't seem to be entirely relieved, however.

"Classes are practically over now, right? I guess we can go home now."

"Good thing it's sunny out. We're not allowed to take umbrellas outside during an evacuation."

The students filed out of the classroom, the very picture of calm. Inuyama joined the line, making sure to escort Inid.

They were just stepping outside the classroom when Inid noticed something.

[Wait! Where's Kino?!]

Inid had finally realized that Kino had walked in the opposite direction and disappeared through the balcony on the other side of the open window. Inuyama had already noticed earlier, but he did not seem too concerned.

[Don't worry. Kino always runs off by herself like this, but she always turns up without a scratch.]

[But we can't just leave her! We have to find Kino!]

Inid turned around, passed by the other students, and poked her head out towards the balcony.

[Kino!] She yelled at the top of her lungs, but Kino had already disappeared round a corner.

[She'll be fine!] Inuyama said from behind her.

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[We have to rescue her!] Inid said, and stepped onto the balcony to follow Kino. What a loyal girl. You know, they say that idiocy makes you braver.

And finally,

"..."

The other students had all left. Inuyama was left alone in the classroom.

"Today... I will defeat you, Shizu..." He said with a terrifying grin.

Where was Shizu, and what was he doing now? He happened to be in the gymnasium.

Unusually by his standards, Shizu was wearing a gym shirt and shorts. Unusually by human standards, Shizu was playing basketball with a katana strapped to his side.

Suddenly, the alarms sounded.

"This isn't good! Evacuate the gymnasium, everyone!" Shizu directed his classmates. They followed his command and quickly exited the building. As the others left, Shizu made up an excuse to stay behind.

"I'll check to make sure no one's been left behind! Go on without me!"

Shizu held the absolute trust of both his peers and teachers alike. There was no one around who held any doubts about his character.



GAKUEN KINO

Now he was left in an empty gymnasium, surrounded by still-rolling basketballs. It was finally time for his transformation sequence.

But... Well, it's no fun describing a man's naked body, so I'm just going to omit that.

There you go. Transformation complete.

Standing in the gymnasium post-transformation was a suspicious man wearing a white school uniform, a silken white cape, a white mask over his face, a pair of white doggy ears and an apple on his head, and a katana on his belt.

"Well, then..."

The suspicious man's eyes glinted seriously as he spoke to himself in a tone dignified enough to use at a funeral.

"I have to do whatever it takes to finish things before Ti gets here..."

And as for the most important point--the demon...

The bespectacled man had transformed into something resembling a large wolfman. It was about four metres tall, unable to walk on its hind legs without bumping its head into the ceiling.

"Aaahh... ah..."

The first thing it did was kick away the man in the work wear, who was trembling beside him.

"Gyuh!"

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With an unusual cry of pain, the man flew through the main entrance doors and lay on the ground, twitching in pain.

[What's going on here?]

Seeing this, four men leapt out of the other station wagon. Like the duo, they were all wearing work overalls, but they were all foreigners. Two caucasian men and two black men, all extremely well-built. All four of them were had large bags slung over their shoulders.

The two caucasian men, in fact, were the ones who had been eying the souvenirs back when Kino was in in Kotoku-in.

The biggest of the four men, a caucasian, was wearing a pair of costume pants. He had probably been in the middle of dressing up as a demon inside the car.

[What happened?! Who did this to you?!] They asked their ally, in English. The short-haired man, pale with fear, also replied in English.

[R, run...! Take me with you!]

It was difficult to understand what the man was trying to say. The four men frowned in confusion when the world suddenly went dark.

[Huh?] [What?] [Hm?] [Oh?]

To be specific, a large shadow had been cast over them all. They looked up, only to meet the eyes of a two-storey tall wolfman.

"O, open fire!"

The men quickly reached into their bags and pulled out their Glock G18C handguns. But at that very moment, the demon mercilessly pounded down upon them.



GAKUEN KINO

[Gah!] [Ugh!] [Oof!] [Argh!]

Although no normal person could be in possession of a Glcok G18C, the four men were knocked out without even getting a chance to fire a single shot. Their unconscious bodies fell in a pile atop one another.

The short-haired man looked up at the sight, almost on the verge of tears.

"Who said there had to be a *real* demon attack...?" He repeated what he said the day before, and fell unconscious to the demon's strike.

Kino looked down upon the main entrance from the balcony of the new wing of the school.

"There! I see it!"

From her viewpoint Kino could see the five fallen men and the demon, which was slowly breaking down the pillars at the main entrance to bring down the school building.

The alarms stopped. The students and the PA team had all evacuated safely. There should be no one left in the school building.

At this point, even the explosion-proof shutters had probably been activated. The demon would likely be able to plough through them with ease, but they would still buy Kino some time.

"That's the one, huh? It's huge!" Kino mumbled, looking down at the demon.

"You still only need one shot to bring it down." Hermes said.

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Of course, even if a demon was the size of a *daidarabotchi*⁸, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun Fighter Rider Kino's secret weapon, Big Cannon ~Shining Iron Demon Destroyer~, which could only be used once per transformation, would be enough to end things. In fact, bigger demons made for better targets because of their sheer size.

"That's right. It might even be better for me, since something that big probably won't be moving very fast. I'd better finish this before Samoyed Mask gets here."

The demons were not Kino's worst enemy.

Kino's greatest nemesis was Samoyed Mask, an eternal thorn in her side. She understood this fact clearly last time, when a student who would grow up to be an author was turned into a demon.

When a demon appeared, Kino would transform in the blink of an eye, use the firearms in her pouches to stun it, then land the final blow with Big Cannon. This was Kino's plan. Speed was critical.

Now, for the transformation sequence you've all been waiting for!

"Here I go, Hermes!"

"Right!"

Standing in a corner of the balcony, hidden out of sight, Kino drew the model gun from the holster around her waist.

She thrust it high into the clear autumn sky, raised the hammer with her thumb, put her finger over the trigger, and took a deep breath.

⁸ *Daidarabotchi* is a gargantic *youkai* from Japanese mythology.



GAKUEN KINO

"From my cold! Dead-"

[Kino!]

"Ha-aaaagh!"

Kino's best scene, the transformation catchphrase, was suddenly interrupted. Kino let out a mangled gasp as she pulled the trigger. Of course, it ended in misfire.

"Wh-wh-wh-wh-who's there?!" Kino stuttered, turning around. A beautiful girl with long blond hair had turned the corner and was running towards her.

"Inid?! What are you doing here?!"

Inid skidded to a stop in front of Kino, quick enough for the soles of her shoes to melt off, and picked out one of the few Japanese phrases she had memorized.

"You idiot!"

"Huh?!"

As Kino stood reeling in confusion, Inid began to rapidly berate her in English.

[It's dangerous here, Kino! You're the one who told me to escape if a demon appeared! Come on, we have to go! It's not too late! The rules say we have to get onto the grounds!]

It went without saying that Kino did not understand a word. Everything just sounded like *Blahblahblahblahblahblah* to her.

"Uh, um..."

Kino was in trouble.

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Of course, Kino could not let Inid find out that she was secretly Mysterious Kino.

That was why she had to get Inid somewhere safe, even if it means she had to lie to her. Kino couldn't let Inid witness her transformation. In fact, the transformation sequence itself only took a moment. All Kino needed was for Inid to look away for even one second.

But...

"What am I supposed to say?!"

Kino lacked the ability to communicate anything to Inid in English. She clutched at her head in frustration, as Inid worriedly spoke to her in English again.

[Are you hurt? Don't worry! I'm here to help you!]

It was actually the complete opposite. Inid, *you're* the reason Kino's in trouble. And that trouble was just getting worse by the second.

"Argh..."

Kino was stuck between a rock and a hard place. She felt bad about it, but Kino was considering striking Inid in the stomach to knock her out temporarily. Her eye glinted suspiciously.

Suddenly,

"I see you may need my help!"

A voice suddenly echoed towards them.

"Hm?" Inid looked up absently towards the gymnasium rooftop on the other side of the main building, where the voice had come from.



GAKUEN KINO

"When the maiden of justice finds herself in danger--"

Everything unfolded as though in slow motion.

The moment Inid took her eyes off her, Kino ran. She ran around the corner Inid had turned on her way here, listening to the voice of a man she did not want to be listening to.

"A lone knight--"

Hiding behind the corner, she raised the model gun in her right hand.

"descends--"

Bang! Bang! Sparkle sparkle.

The first series of sounds came from Kino's model gun going off. The Sparkle Sparkle was the sound effect from the transformation. Kino's side of the balcony was illuminated as though a flashbang had gone off. Of course, Inid couldn't see any of this because she didn't have eyes on the back of her head.

"from the distant skies!"

Inid watched as a highly suspicious man wearing a white school uniform, a white cape, a white mask, a pair of doggy ears, and an apple atop his head struck a pose.

[...]

Inid was struck dumb by the display. Which was completely understandable.

Someone suddenly walked up to her from behind.

"Great--"

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She's here! The main character of this story, Mysterious Bishoujo Gun fighter Rider Kino, hereon referred to as Mysterious Kino. She appeared from the direction opposite to the one Kino had run towards earlier.

She wasn't much different from Kino in terms of appearance. She was wearing a winter uniform just like before.

The only real differences were the buckles on her pouches (they were now shaped like cats), and the addition of sweatpants under her skirt that killed any hope of titillation. It was not surprising that Samoyed Mask had gotten Kino mixed up with Mysterious Kino.

"Great TIMING!" Kino yelled.

With her right hand she drew a Barrett M82A2 rifle. Big Cannon was still holstered.

An M82A2 is a rifle that utilizes gigantic .50 caliber rounds. These rounds are used in heavy machine guns, and were used by fighter planes in WWII.

The Barrett M82A1 is well-known for its numerous movie appearances, but the A2 is a bullpup version, where the action is located behind the trigger.

This particular gun could be used as an anti-aircraft weapon, where the back of the gun could be mounted on the shooter's shoulder during the shot. This was why it was shorter than the other rifles from Barrett, but it was still 1.5 metres long and a hefty monster at 15 kilograms.

Mounting the M82A2 on her shoulder, Kino approached Inid and took aim at Samoyed Mask.

"Here."



GAKUEN KINO

She then put something resembling headphones over Inid's ears with her left hand.

It was a pair of specialized earmuffs that prevented hearing damage from overexposure to loud noises like gunfire. Outfitted with electronic circuits, it amplified everyday sounds and repelled sudden loud noises.

The sounds of gunfire were nothing to the transformed Kino's ears, but earmuffs like this were a necessity for a normal person, who might be left with ringing ears after only a single gunshot.

"Ahoy there, Mysterious Kino! Are you well?" Samoyed Mask asked from the gymnasium rooftop.

"Yeah, thanks!"

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Kino answered Samoyed Mask's greeting with a barrage of shots. The refreshing sound of .50 caliber gunfire shook the autumn air. Large shell casings flew out of the M82A2, sunlight glinting off their surface.

[...]

Inid's eyes widened.

"Hahahahahahaha! Your violent shows of affection never cease to floor me, Mysterious Kino! It's been a while! How are you? Good day! These are today's greetings."

Samoyed Mask greeted Kino again, deflecting 40g+ pieces of metal travelling at 2.5 times the speed of sound with a single katana.

"GO AWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAY!"

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Kino did not hesitate to repeatedly fire off rounds that could bifurcate a human being from a distance of 1.5 kilometres towards Samoyed Mask, who could not have been more than a hundred metres away from her.

"DIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

Kino was desperate.

"These are pretty easy to deflect at an angle, you know~"

Samoyed Mask could not have been more relaxed.

Thanks to Kino's indiscriminate firing, the M82A2, which could only hold ten rounds at once, was out of ammunition. Kino quickly put the M82A2 back in her pouch and drew another gun--no, another weapon.

This weapon is called a Panzerfaust 3. It is a weapon that consists of a gigantic projectile containing a rocket booster mounted onto a cylinder. It is a recoilless weapon. Whenever a projectile is launched, the kickback is taken care of with a scattering of metal dust expelled from the back. This product's relative lack of backblast is one of its most lauded features. And unlike an RPG7, you can even use it indoors when you don't have a lot of space behind you! Isn't it wonderful? How much for one of these?

The projectile was launched, and the rocket kicked in in midair. It is a clearly different weapon from the likes of rocket launchers, where the rockets on the projectiles are active from the beginning. No, this will not be on the exam.

For your reference, it's also used by the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, and is called a hand-carry anti-tank projectile. Perhaps some of you readers have had the chance to shoot one of these into the Mt. Fuji mountainside. I'm so jealous.



GAKUEN KINO

In other words, this weapon exists to destroy sturdy tanks. I guarantee you that, if nothing else, it is not the kind of weapon you use to silence a lone man armed with nothing but a katana.

Kino mounted the weapon onto her shoulder, unfolded the grip, held it with her right hand, and checked on either side of herself. Once she had confirmed that Inid was in a position where she was as sheltered from the blast as possible, Kino fired mercilessly.

Do I really need to say who the target was? A sound more refreshing than before assaulted the air as the projectile made its way towards Kino's target.

"Hm. Rather violent of you today."

Samoyed Mask simply spun away.

The projectile hit the gymnasium rooftop. It left behind a blast powerful enough to pierce the reinforced concrete and shatter every window in the vicinity, creating a giant grey cloud of smoke.

"Guuuoh?"

As the .50 caliber rounds and the anti-tank projectile passed over its head--

"Guoh? Guuuuuuuuoh?"

The demon looked up at it in confusion. If I had to put subtitles on its lines, maybe it was saying something like,

[Why isn't she shooting at me?]

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"All right. He's out of my way for now."

By the time the white smoke cleared in the wind, there was no one standing on the gymnasium rooftop.

Kino relaxed for the moment and placed the Panzerfaust 3 back into her pouch. The launcher tube is a one-off, but the firing and sighting units are reusable.

Kino then gave a word of reassurance to Inid, standing absently beside her.

"You're going to be fine. I'll protect you."

"Oh..."

Inid had heard these words before. She knew exactly what anime this line was from. Then there was only one thing she could say in reply.

"Smile, we're friends!"

"Huh?"

Kino didn't get it.

This time, Kino had to get Inid to safety before anything else. The demon came after.

But of course, she would have to introduce herself properly so that Inid wouldn't think she was some suspicious person who shot anything that moved, right?

Kino looked at Inid and desperately recalled the things she heard in English class.



GAKUEN KINO

[Uh, um... My, name, is... uh, "Justice Hero, Kino"!]

[Could it be? So you're the warrior of justice who turns demons back into humans!]

Kino had no idea what Inid was saying, but from the looks of her smile, her desperate gesticulating must have worked.

[Yes, yes, thank you!]

[Amazing! Thank you for rescuing me, Kino!]

[You're well done...] "Uh, I mean, uh..." [You're welcome! Let's escape! OK?]

[Yes! Please lead the way!]

It was a miraculously successful exchange. You never know until you try--conversations just end if you give up.

"Come on!" [Let's go!]

Kino took Inid by the hand and ran from the balcony. She might have ended up dislocating Inid's arm from her shoulder socket if she ran at full speed, so she had to slow down a great deal.

Kino whispered to Hermes, who was shaking as he hung from her belt.

"That was close. Now all I have to do is get Inid onto the grounds. The demons never go out there!"

"Right. That's *if* you forgot that you have to take care of Pervert Mask."

"Don't remind me."

"Sorry."

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Kino and Hermes stepped into the building interior and leapt into the nearest classroom.

"No one's here. Good."

They stepped out into the hallway, on the lookout for the demon or its monsters.

They carefully descended the steps to the floor below. *Crack! Bang!* They could hear things breaking from inside the building. The demon was rampaging, but that just made it easy for Kino to hear where it was.

Kino quietly poked her head out from behind a corner at the hallway on the first floor that connected the new wing to the main building.

"Found you..."

The demon was in sight: It was about thirty metres ahead, kicking the walls and clawing out its surroundings.

It was so preoccupied with its rampage that it would probably be all right to sneak by. Kino and Inid could cross the new wing and exit into the grounds.

So Kino did not spare a thought as she whispered to her friend.

"Follow me, Inid."

"Guooh?"

Inid?

The demon reacted.



GAKUEN KINO

The whispered name of its target was more than enough.

It stopped tearing apart metal reinforcements with its claws and looked around to the spot thirty metres behind itself. There was no one there.

But for a single moment, the demon spotted threads of gold--the flash of Inid's blond hair as she ran after Kino.

"Guuuoh!"

The demon roared, then got on all fours to pursue its target.

Kino ran through the hallway, Inid in tow.

"Behind us!" Hermes yelled, noticing the muffled sounds of claws and paw pads against the floor.

"Whoa!"

Kino reacted instantly. She sent Inid ahead, switching positions. She turned her back to Inid and looked upon the demon, which had rapidly closed the distance between them to a mere ten metres.

At the same time, she drew a gun.

It was a Saiga-12 version K, an automatic shotgun that allows for continuous fire just by pulling the trigger again. It is a Russian gun that looks exactly like the famous military-use AK-style rifles. It has a 12-gauge box magazine--in other words, it holds eight regular-sized slugs.

Kino held the gun at waist-level and opened fire.

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Nine 00 buck shells, 8 millimetres in diameter, were fired at once. In continuous fire, at that. Although it might not have been enough to pierce the demon's thick hide, it was probably enough to give it the equivalent of a good beating.

Cruelly enough, Kino was aiming for its face in particular. The rounds landed a direct hit on the demon's snout.

"Guuoh!"

The demon yelped like a dog whose tail had been stepped on, and turned to the hallway window. It then smashed through multiple panes of bulletproof glass and fled outside.

"You're not getting away!"

Kino quickly reloaded the Saiga-12, stepped close to the window, and took aim.

"Damn it!"

But the demon was already out of sight. It had probably gone into another building on the school property.

"That was seriously fast! That's probably the quickest demon I've ever fought! Wolves really are different."

"That's not all, Kino. I didn't notice it at all because it didn't have any bloodlust towards you."

"You're right... normally, you could sense demons faster than this, Hermes. Are you going senile, by any chance?"

"No way, I'm not that old."

"Huh..."



GAKUEN KINO

Kino stared out the window in thought, her hair billowing in the wind.

She suddenly felt a great deal of bloodlust directed towards herself.

"Hm?"

Kino turned back to the hallway, only to find herself facing down several monsters that had blown up like balloons.

Miniature wolfmen, about a fifth the size of the demon, were popping up all over the halls. They would soon fill the floor they were on.

"That's right!" Kino slapped her forehead. The hairs that had scattered when she shot the demon earlier must have started turning into monsters.

And thanks to the wind blowing in from the broken windows, the hairs flew all the way over to the end of the hallways, growing into monsters. They're such cute babies. In other words, in about ten seconds both Kino and Inid would be swamped by dozens of monsters. There wasn't even any time to ask them to wait.

"This way!"

Kino again took Inid by her hand, kicked down a nearby classroom door, and took shelter inside.

"Take a seat behind me."

Kino had Inid sit at a desk by the window, and switched guns. In place of the Saiga-12 she armed herself with a German-made Rheinmetall MG3 machine gun.

The MG3 is a modern-day version of the legendary MG42 that was used by the Germans during WWII. This is why the two models

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look the same. It is about 130 centimetres long and weighs over ten kilograms. Because it is a belt-fed firearm, a large magazine containing 120 rounds was attached to its left side.

Kino slung the MG3 over her shoulder like a rifle and took aim at the window that led to the hallway.

Whoa, that's a lot. The fully matured monsters writhed in the hallways, filling the space in blackness.

Soon, the monsters blew out the windows and doors as they flooded the classroom like water in a capsizing ship. Kino grinned.

"If I had five yen for every monster I shot, I'd be a really rich person by now."

"Why're you so relaxed, Kino?" Hermes asked, astonished.

Kino pulled the trigger.

BAAAAAANG! One long gunshot rang out through the classroom. The 7.62 millimetre round turned one monster to ash.

There were so many monsters squirming around that Kino didn't even need to aim. A half-hearted shot was enough to KO one monster instantly. The ring popped up from the right side of the gun. Red-hot shell casings fell to the floor like droplets of rain.

Kino turned the gun left and right as she fired and fired and fired. She fended off the approaching wave of monsters as though she were protected by a magical barrier.

And in the midst of this surreal scene--

"..."

Inid was quietly looking at Kino.



GAKUEN KINO

After the ferocious roar of gunfire, one last shot made its way to a monster. Now there was only one left in the classroom.

That one monster lunged at Kino.

"Don't make me laugh!"

Kino swung her right arm and smacked the monster with the machine gun. The monster flew into the ceiling, bounced onto the floor, bounced into the air again, and turned into ash mid-flight.

With this, the ruined classroom was left with nothing but piles of ash.

"Phew..." Kino sighed. When she turned around, she saw Inid standing, staring at her with an odd look.

Kino put on heat-resistant gloves and pulled out the MG3's scalding-hot barrel in one smooth motion. She then took out a spare barrel from her pouch and affixed it to the gun. She then began to switch out the magazine.

Inid waited for her in silence.

Behind her was a window leading out to the balcony. Outside was visible a small green patch of forest. The patch of green was then blocked out by the form of the wolfman.

The demon, appearing in silence, raised its right arm with even less noise.

"...?"

Perhaps she had sensed something. Inid quietly turned around.

And...

[Huh?]

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Her eyes met those of the demon.

"No!"

The moment she heard Inid's voice, Kino turned around.

The demon, standing outside the window, was poised to strike Inid's head at any time, its arm raised into the air. Kino would not be able to aim the MG3 in time.

"Damn! Can I do it fast enough?!"

Kino decided to toss away the MG3 and draw Big Cannon. But suddenly--

"Maintain discipline!"

With one loud cry, a lone man jumped in through the window.

The young man, his long white hair in a neat ponytail, wore sunglasses and a black coat. He leapt towards the demon, firing in midair with the APS Stechkin handguns in both hands.

The APS is a Russian automatic pistol, but it can also be switched to a semiautomatic mode. The young man fired mercilessly, scattering shell casings everywhere, and amazingly enough, landed on the writhing wolfman's shoulder.

Oh! Looks like he's out of ammo. A pair of spare magazine instantly slipped out of his sleeves. The young man smoothly inserted them into the guns, and still standing on the demon's shoulder, viciously continued his attack from point blank range. This time, to the demon's head.

"Guuuuuuuoh!"



GAKUEN KINO

The poor demon let out a pained cry as it twisted and curled.

"Hah!"

And just as the man in black jumped off its shoulder, the demon quickly fled outside. The young man continued to fire at it until its tail had finally disappeared into the distance, but he did not give chase.

Soon, the Stechkins were out of ammunition. The slides remained still, and white smoke emitted from them.

Inid had been rescued in the nick of time.

"Phew..."

Kino stopped mid-toss and breathed a sigh of relief.

Inid, meanwhile, pointed at the man in the sunglasses and the black coat, who was standing on the balcony railing, with an open palm. She spoke to Kino in delighted Japanese.

"Boss! A girl fell out of the sky!"

"No, he's a guy... But... I get what you're trying to say. Yup. You're always around to help, huh? Detective Wanwan."

He was a familiar face to Kino now--Detective Wanwan, the skilled but mysterious boy who would appear out of nowhere to assist Kino, slid open the glass door and stepped into the classroom.

"I'm sorry for being so late." He greeted Kino, then turned to Inid, who stared at him in shock.

[It's a pleasure to meet you. My name is Detective Wanwan. I protect this school by Mysterious Kino's side.]

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It was a very polite introduction.

He was, of course, speaking in English, but was it some kind of law he was following? He neglected to translate the 'Wanwan'. Or maybe 'Detective Bow Wow' is just too corny.

[Oh my gosh! You're a warrior of justice, too! Amazing! This is so exciting!]

In her excitement, Inid forgot all about the threat to her life moments before and lost herself in the excitement. Kino turned around and addressed Detective Wanwan.

"Thanks, Detective Wanwan. I just need to ask you for one more thing."

"What is it?"

"Take Inid somewhere safe on the school grounds. I'll take care of the demon and the monsters myself, so please take care of her!"
Kino smiled.

But Detective Wanwan shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't do that."

"Huh? why not?"

"It's too dangerous."

"Come on, I can take care of myself."

"That's not it. I'm saying it's too dangerous for both Inid and the other students."

"...What do you mean?"



GAKUEN KINO

"I've been observing the demon's movements thus far, and I have come to a conclusion."

Detective Wanwan's gaze turned from the curious Kino to the bright-eyed Inid, who was regarding her presence between the two warriors of justice with delight.

"The demon's target is the young lady here. It wants nothing to do with us, it seems."

"What? Ohhh! I get it! That's why Hermes never noticed it..."

"So we were just obstacles for it, huh."

As Kino and Hermes mumbled bitterly, Detective Wanwan explained the situation to Inid in English.

He explained that a demon acted upon the impulses it had been driven by in the moment before its transformation. He also explained that, for some reason, the demon's goal was to kidnap Inid. Detective Wanwan explained that he could not take Inid to the grounds, where the other students were stationed. If he were to do so, the demon would leave the building and rampage through the grounds. This would force gunmen like Kino and Detective Wanwan to take caution with stray bullets--their combat capabilities would be dulled, and it would risk the chance of student injury.

[...I see. I understand. So it's after me...] Inid mumbled, voice filled with more sadness than shock. Her joy from earlier seemed to have evaporated instantly. Inid probably knew something about the demon's motives that Kino and Detective Wanwan didn't.

"..."

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Having noticed Inid's mental state, the perceptive Detective Wanwan's lip twitched in unease.

"Then what can we do? Any ideas?" Kino asked. Why don't you try thinking for yourself sometimes?

Detective Wanwan's answer was immediate.

"We'll continue the fight inside this building, while protecting Inid. As long as the demon is after her, it will follow her here by scent. That's when you can finish it off."

"But-" Kino was about to complain that Inid would be placed in danger, but, "No... I guess you're right. That's the only way. It might make the fight a bit harder, but I can't run away. If the demon comes to us, then I just have to face it head-on."

Even Kino could not disagree with Detective Wanwan's keen intellect.

"But this location is not entirely advantageous. Let's move elsewhere."

Kino expressed her agreement with Detective Wanwan's reasonable suggestion.

"So, where do we go?" Why don't you try thinking for (rest omitted)?

"Naturally, we will be able to fight at full strength in an open area. I propose that we relocate to the rooftop of the main building."

"Right! You're so smart." Kino exclaimed. But since she wasn't Satori the *youkai*⁹, Kino could not read Detective Wanwan's mind.

⁹ Satori is a *youkai* from Japanese mythology that can read minds.



GAKUEN KINO

Detective Wanwan had chosen the rooftop not only because it was the best place for fighting with firearms a demon suited for close-range combat, but also because it was the optimal place for taking down a swordfighting pervert.

That man would undoubtedly, make an appearance in order to get in Kino's way. He just had to.

Then...

This time, I swear...

I will--

Kill-

"What's wrong, Detective Wanwan?" Kino asked. Her confused face was reflected on Detective Wanwan's sunglasses.

"N, nothing! L, let's go. Leave the rear guard to me." Detective Wanwan barely managed to fumble out a cool answer.

"Right! Reliable as always, huh?"

With her left hand, Kino took Inid's hand in hers.

"Let's go! We can run a little slow if you'd like."

She began to run, holding the MG3 in her right hand.

From classroom to hallway, from hallway to stairway--

As Kino watched the front and Detective Wanwan watched their backs as they ran...

"I'm bored. Are they here yet?" The man in the white cape and the white mask mumbled, obviously with nothing to do.

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He was above the rooftop. In other words, he was atop the squarish building that contained the exit onto the rooftop. This was where the TV antenna was located. He was lying on this structure, looking up at the clear autumn sky.

"*Tenkouhiba*, eh?"¹⁰ He mumbled.

In Japan, the phrase *Tenkouhiba* is used as a poetic term describing autumn, but in the original Chinese, it's actually a cold-blooded warning saying, "In autumn, beware of invaders on fat horses who come to plunder the harvests".

Whether or not he knew this,

"*Snore...*"

The masked man began to sleep. And below him--in other words, on the rooftop, the demon was stirring.

¹⁰ *Tenkouhiba* is written with the kanji "天高馬肥".



GAKUEN KINO

Chapter 6 - Part 5: Trust ~Faith~

"All right! There's no one here!" Kino yelled, stepping onto the rooftop of the main building. She glanced at the gymnasium roof next to them, and also found nothing but rubble. She turned around and checked the rooftop of the new wing. She found no problems there.

She dragged Inid from the doors. Detective Wanwan came as a rear guard, pointing his Stechkins behind them and tightly shutting the door.

Detective Wanwan made use of the bolt that was installed onto the door as a precaution against demon attacks. The door was made to resist even explosions, so it would not break down so easily.

The trio made their way to the middle of the rooftop area. All they had to do now was wait for the demon here. Though it would probably try to create monsters as soon as it appeared, Kino was determined to not allow that to happen.

"Oh. It was a trap." Hermes muttered from Kino's belt.

"What?"

Kino tilted her head. At the same time--

"No!"

Detective Wanwan noticed it as well.

"What? What's wrong?" Kino asked. There were no demons, monsters, or Samoyed Mask here, as far as she could tell.

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"Look at the concrete." Detective Wanwan replied. Kino looked down at the floor under her feet.

She soon understood what he meant. Countless thin scratch marks had been made all around the rooftop floor, circling it along the edges. The marks had probably been made by the demon's claws.

Kino's extraordinary eyesight was able to make out the black demon hairs in the grooves left by its claws.

"This doesn't even make sense! Doesn't hair get blown away by the wind?" Kino asked the obvious question.

A rather strong breeze was blowing on the rooftop. The presence of hair clinging to the claw marks didn't match up with the fact that the demon had just used this very wind and its own hair to its advantage not too long ago.

"Look carefully. The hairs are all slightly wet. It probably wet them with its saliva--sticky, as a canine's saliva tends to be. We've been caught in a trap." Detective Wanwan looked furious.

"Th, that *demon* came up with a plan like this? Is that even allowed?!" Pino-I mean, Kino was outraged.

And as though they had sensed the trio's presence, the hairs began to grow. They swelled and thickened, slowly growing limb-like forms and growing.

"This one is really using its head. What kind of a student could have turned into this demon? That distraction tactic it used before, and the way it hid its presence from us is on a totally different level from the ones you've fought so far." Hermes gasped, astonished.

Kino and the others had no way of knowing at this point, but this particular demon was not a student. He had come all this way to



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kidnap Inid--he was skilled enough to go around Akihabara with a submachine gun.

"Then we'll have to take them all out before they mature fully."

Detective Wanwan opened fire.

A single bullet made its way towards the growing monster.

"Hm." "Huh?"

Detective Wanwan and Kino watched, fixated, as the bullet bounced off mid-flight and disappeared into the air. Detective Wanwan fired several more shots, but each round was deflected as though it had been fired from an air gun.

"I see..." Detective Wanwan grimaced. Obviously, the monsters wouldn't mature this slowly if they were open to attack during their maturation stage.

"Damn it..." Kino tightened her grip on her MG3 and fell into thought.

Though she was reluctant to admit it, she had fallen into the demon's trap. What was the first thing she should do?

This time, Kino thought for herself. Three seconds later, she came to a decision.

"Looks like we'll have to shoot them all down, no matter what it takes."

Detective Wanwan nodded.

"I agree. The monsters are maturing this slowly because the demon is attempting to scare us into fleeing the rooftop. But I am certain that the demon will be lying in wait for us just down the

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stairs. It would be better for us to annihilate these monsters here than risk a shootout indoors."

With that, Detective Wanwan slipped the two Stechkins back into his sleeves. Although they were capable of automatic fire, handguns did not pack enough raw firepower. In exchange, from his sleeve dropped out an Ultimax 100 machine gun.

The Ultimax 100 is a light machine gun made in Singapore. It utilizes NATO cartridges, and weighs only five kilograms without the magazine. Another strong point about this gun is the fact that the recoil is weak in comparison to other firearms.

Guns like this are extremely useful for providing support, and are classified as SAWs--Squad Automatic Weapons.

Detective Wanwan's weapon was an Ultimax 100 Mark 3. A 100-round drum magazine was affixed to it. The bipod, the carrying handle, and the stock had been removed. As long as the stock isn't there, there shouldn't be any problems sliding the gun into his sleeves, right? Right?

Finally, attached to the end of the barrel was a combat knife-type blade. Detective Wanwan would use this weapon if the enemy had gotten too close.

Kino looked at Inid, standing beside her. Her profile, highlighted by her earmuffs, betrayed the look of anxiety, fear, and a certain other emotion.

The countless monsters continued to grow. They were at about twenty percent maturation. Kino and the others had no idea how much longer things would take, but there was doubt that they would be attacked the moment the monsters reached full size.



GAKUEN KINO

That was the only time Kino and Detective Wanwan's attacks would have a chance.

If it was just the two of them, trained fighters like Kino and Detective Wanwan might have been able to do something. They might even have considered jumping off the rooftop to escape. It would hurt, of course, so they really wouldn't want to do that, though.

But now, their priority was to protect Inid. In other words, they were at a disadvantage. Things could not have been worse.

"Hah! At least I won't be bored today!" Kino yelled, trying to talk big.

Suddenly--

"I see you may need my help! Again!"

A clear voice called out to them.

"Ugh!" [Oh!] "So you're here!"

Kino, Inid, and Detective Wanwan turned to the source of the voice.

A breeze.

A man in a white cape stood on the squarish structure, under the clear blue sky. It was the man who had slept clear through the demon's setting of the trap on the rooftop.

"When the maiden of jus--"

"Fire!"

Kino shot at him before he could even finish.

"Wait! Meanie! Eek."

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With a flick of his cape, the man evaded the bullets and disappeared from sight.

[Is that all right? I think that man was just trying to say something...] Inid asked Kino, who had ceased fire.

Hearing Detective Wanwan's translation, Kino replied immediately.

"Ittsu ooru ohkei! No Puroburemu! Ai shii himu, ai jyasuto shuuto himu! (It's all okay! No problem! I see him, I just shoot him)." Kino said, the suspiciously situation-specific line of English coming to her lips without a moment's hesitation.

That was the way Kino lived.

"That was close... You almost hit me, you meanie! I'm soooooo mad! Listen to me when I'm talking~!" The man in the white cape, who had disappeared for the moment, returned with a cutesy line. Kino was not happy at all about this, but she stopped firing for now. She didn't want to waste any more bullets.

"..."

Detective Wanwan tightly clenched the Ultimax 100, shaking. It looked like he was pondering if he could defeat his adversary with this weapon, and formulating plans A through Z in his head.

Inid looked at the caped man, curious. The man spoke to her in fluent in English.

[Hey now! Don't look at me like that, Beautiful Blonde Girl! This is a misunderstanding! I am not here to confuse you, I assure you. How about an apple? It's full of fiber, which is excellent for your digestive system. Not only that, it also contains Vitamin C, which is



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essential for natural skin care, potassium, which helps your body to expel sodium, and it is chock-full of polyphenals that fight allergens.]

Inid's answer was immediate.

[Not right now, thank you. Um, who are you?]

[That is an excellent question! I am one of the three glorious warriors who defend this school alongside Mysterious Kino and Detective Wanwan! My honoured name is--Samoyed Mask *f*(fortissimo), the Emphasizing Pursuer of Light and Darkness! Write it down so you don't forget, now! For your reference, I have known those two for a very long time.]

[Oh, so you too...]

Inid looked rather surprised.

[I'm glad you're all right. I can't bear to see an innocent maiden like yourself being injured, after all. 'Doesn't Mysterious Kino count as an innocent maiden', you might ask. I might be somewhat reluctant to answer that question honestly, but this is the truth. My apple shall only go to the greatest beauty! And are you entirely certain you have no need of an apple?]

Hearing Detective Wanwan's translation, Kino put her MG3 on the ground.

"..."

She then silently drew the Panzerfaust 3 from her pouch for the second time today.

"Maybe I should give your head a little ventilation."

How violent. She's raring to go!

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Inid, who had heard this line of Japanese in the past, felt a shiver run down her spine.

For your reference, this Panzerfaust 3 was equipped with a tandem warhead, which was more powerful and accurate than the one she used earlier--not to mention that it exploded twice.

"Wait! Calm yourself, Mysterious Kino. I'm sure you understand that we have a job to take care of first."

"Hm? You really think there's something more important to me than throwing you into the depths of hell? Like getting compensation for all the grief you caused me? Then give me 10 million yen! Talk is cheap, you know!"

Detective Wanwan was translating Samoyed Mask *f* and Kino's conversation for Inid. Meanwhile, the monsters continued to grow larger.

"Goodness! Demands like that practically disqualify you from being a warrior of justice. No, could any human being with a moral compass even say such a thing?" Samoyed Mask *f* asked with a shrug.

"Getting that from you? I don't even know if I'm supposed to get angry or laugh." Kino answered honestly. She was itching to pull the trigger on her Panzerfaust 3.

"Mysterious Kino, our first order of action must be to prepare to take down these monsters that surround us. We still have a small window of time in which we can find out why the demon is after this girl and come up with countermeasures."

"Damn it..."



GAKUEN KINO

Samoyed Mask *f* was being surprisingly rational. Kino pouted and pocketed her Panzerfaust 3.

"Hah! Whoosh!"

Samoyed Mask *f* jumped from the structure and landed before the trio. Even though he didn't really have to say the onomatopoeia out loud.

[Allow me to ask, then, Miss Inid. I'm sure you must some idea as to why the demon is after you. It may be difficult for you to say, but I ask that you be honest and tell us everything. Including your measurements.] Samoyed Mask *f* said.

Detective Wanwan gave Kino a translation. Kino kicked Samoyed Mask *f*, sending him flying ten metres away. Sexual harassment is forbidden.

"Aaaaack!"

Samoyed Mask *f* flew backwards. He came to a stop as his head smashed into one of the maturing monsters.

"..."

Kino silently awaited Inid's response.

"Ouch, that really hurt, you meanie!"

Samoyed Mask *f* took the opportunity to walk back towards them.

Inid, who stood still with her head bowed, slowly started.

She soon raised her head.

[I know...]

Inid's tearful green eyes looked over at the three warriors.

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[There's someone after my life.]

"Not here, huh? Heeeeey!"

Chako-sensei was walking through the hallways in search of someone.

She wandered through the deserted new wing, opening the classroom doors one by one.

Was she all right? The school was a den of monsters. The demon could have set traps anywhere.

"Not in this wing. I guess I'll check over in the old building."

Chako-sensei strutted through the halls as though she was on a hike or on her way to a picnic.

She had no idea that the demon was watching her from behind, fangs bared.

"What do you mean, someone's after you?" Kino asked, shocked.

Detective Wanwan translated for her. Inid's shoulders drooped. She was nearly crying. The monsters around them had matured to over half of their full sizes.

[I'm sure you've heard that my father is the CEO of a large corporation. The company creates all kinds of products, including a new weapons system being developed for the US military. Of course, I don't know much about it myself...]

"Right. Keep going." Kino said.



GAKUEN KINO

[Yes... There's another faction that's after this new system. We have no idea if it's a foreign government, an international terrorist group, or a rival corporation in America. They first tried all sorts of things to coerce my father, but he refused to cooperate. So they moved on to threatening me. Every day we received threatening letters saying 'If you do not cooperate, you will never see your daughter again'.]

[Inhuman wretches!] Samoyed Mask *f* declared indignantly.

'Speak for yourself!' Kino thought, but she kept the line to herself.

Inid continued.

[I couldn't even go to school because it might put the other students in harm's way. So all this time I stayed in a deserted mountain compound with my personal guards.]

"All this time?" Kino asked.

[About two years now.]

"Two whole years?! Since you were thirteen?"

Inid nodded.

"No way! Those are the best years of your youth! And you never got to go to school, make friends, or eat delicious food outside?!" Kino asked, nostrils flaring in anger. That last point especially must have hit her hard.

"Unforgivable, in more ways than one." Detective Wanwan growled.

"I will cut them." Samoyed Mask *f* declared, smiling.

The monsters were at 70% maturity. Only 30% left.

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[It was hard sometimes, but it wasn't all bad.] Inid smiled, determination apparent in her teary eyes.

"Really?"

[I spent my spare time watching Japanese anime. My butler bought me DVDs. They were amazing. I'd never seen anything like them, and it was the first time I'd heard anyone speaking Japanese. There were so many different kinds of stories that I never got bored. Ordinary high school students being taken away to another world to do battle, being forced to fight battles in a robot made by your own father, detailed characterization of girls in everyday life, handsome guys playing sports, flirty high school students being stabbed to death...]

'Isn't there something off about that last one?' Kino wondered, but she kept the thought to herself.

[And magical girls transforming to fight evil! If I'd never watched anime, I would have always been a depressed and gloomy person.]

"That's why you came to Japan?" Hermes asked, first in Japanese, then again in English.

Inid, not really wondering where this voice came from, answered.

[That's right. Thanks to the FBI, we're very close to finding out who it was that was threatening my father. But that also meant that the other party might react even more strongly, the closer they are to capture. So I escaped even further to Japan, because it's a very safe country. Kuroshima-sensei recommended this school to me because it was reinforced to resist demon attacks. I finally got to attend school, and I had such a good time hanging out with the Take Action Now Club. These last few days were like a dream come true.]



GAKUEN KINO

"So those guys are planning to take you while you're here in Japan. And they've been looking for a chance to kidnap you all this time..." Kino deduced, remembering the incident in the Kamakura weapon store, and the way that they had rented all of Health Land for their trip.

"They came directly to the school because they couldn't wait any longer. That must mean-"

"They fell to the demonic temptation without realizing." Samoyed Mask *f* concluded.

[Yes! It's all my fault... This demon wouldn't have appeared if not for me. Everyone is trying so hard to not become one of them, but now... I can't come to this school anymore. I can't let anyone get hurt...]

Was she down, or just looking down? Inid hid her face again.

"No, not at all! You know what? This is actually a good thing!" Kino said to her excitedly.

"Pardon?" Inid, hearing the translation, looked up in surprise.

"She is correct. This is just the opportunity we need." Surprisingly, even Detective Wanwan agreed.

Finally, Samoyed Mask *f* drew his sword with a flourish and explained their plan.

"In other words, we will beat them to a pulp, then turn them over to the police! Your problems are as good as solved!"

[Huh?]

"That's it! We couldn't just take down those bastards if they were normal humans, but we're warriors of justice! There's nothing we



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can't do against a demon. We'll turn him back to normal, then tie him up! So, now that everything's clear, let's let things loose!" Kino grinned.

But, uh... wasn't the demon already running loose this whole time?

Inid looked up at the trio's smiles, incredulous.

[But everyone! We're still surrounded by all these monsters!]

The trio glanced at the beasts around them.

The monsters were now at about 80% maturation. From a bird's eye view, the building probably looked like it was surrounded by a dark border. Just like a funeral picture.

"Right. I guess there's a lot of them." Said Kino.

"I admit, we probably haven't yet faced anything of this level so far." Said Detective Wanwan.

"Well, I suppose it'll make for a decent challenge." Said Samoyed Mask *f*.

[Please, everyone! Leave me and run! I have nothing to do with this school! With me gone--] Inid pleaded, sincerity clear in her voice.

"No, we can't do that." Kino interrupted her. "We're warriors of justice. There's no such thing as falling back or turning tail."

Detective Wanwan and Samoyed Mask *f*, guarding Inid from either side, nodded.

"Circular defence!" Kino called, and the trio surrounded Inid at once.



GAKUEN KINO

That was some amazing movement. What are you people, Spartans?

And so, with the walls and the hundreds of 90% mature monsters around them--

"Take her if you can!" Kino shouted, MG3 in hand.

"I will defeat you all..." Detective Wanwan muttered, Ultimax 100s pointed at the monsters.

"Come any closer and I will cut you down! If you don't, I'll step in myself!" Samoyed Mask taunted with his katana.

"See? There's a reason we're pointing our guns and pulling the trigger at the demon..." The biggest eater out of the three masses of bloodlust (that would be Kino) said to Inid. Detective Wanwan quickly translated for her.

"We're not fighting for ourselves!" Kino continued, head held high, narrowly stopping herself from declaring that it was for delicious curry udon. "We're fighting to protect others!"

Yes, we know you're fighting to protect the cafeteria lunch ladies.

"Shut up! I'm having a moment here!"

Whoa! ...

"That's why I'm going to protect you. You just sit back and relax. If you don't want to see us get hurt, just shut your eyes. You don't need to look at us even if we're nothing but mangled corpses after this battle. But-

"..."

"Even if it's just this once, have faith in us, okay?"



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[Faith...] Inid muttered in English. Faith=trust. This was English Lesson #3, brought to you by Gakuen Kino.

Kino's one-man performance continued.

"We're violent punks who can handle weapons like firearms and swords better than anyone. We live for blood. We're evil bastards who don't deserve to exist in a peaceful world, but..."

[...]

"As long as we have people we need to protect, and as long as those people have faith in us, we can become radiant warriors of justice!"

By the time Kino had finished her rousing speech, the monsters were at the final stage of growth.

Hundreds of miniature wolfmen were swarming, as though they were trapped in the Odakyu subway line during rush hour. It was so crowded that some of the monsters couldn't even touch the floor. *Splat*. Oh, looks like some of them are finally getting squished to death.

In a 10-metre diameter circle in the middle of the monsters was an area where the floor was still clearly visible. In the middle of this clearing stood Kino and the others.

"So I guess that's a hundred monsters to a person. Although I wouldn't have any trouble taking care of them all myself."

"Please, I'd have no problems on my own. Why don't you two go take a nap while I finish them off?"



GAKUEN KINO

"Hah! Stand back while I give a performance of my excellent swordsmanship! Get some tea and cake ready for me while you're at it."

Inid had no idea what these people were saying, but she could tell that they were positively overflowing with confidence.

Faith. Faith. Faith.

The single word would not leave her head.

[...]

Clenching her hand over her chest, Inid made a decision. Determination set over her emerald-green eyes.

"Kino!"

"Whoa!"

Shocked at being called out very suddenly, Kino looked around. Inid was staring at her, hand over her right side.

Inid used what little Japanese she could remember in order to communicate to Kino.

"Not good! I don't have a gun!"

"Uh... wha?"

"You gonna make it out of this alive, punk?"

"Hey..."

"I do not wish to be a burden!"

"Um..."

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"Sir, I would like to join in the defence!"

"Well..."

Kino could figure out what Inid was trying to say.

She wanted to join them in their fight. That she wanted to borrow a gun to use.

But.

"Uh..."

Kino was at a loss. Would it really be all right to hand a gun to a civilian like Inid?

To Kino in her transformed state, taking a bullet would be painful, but not fatal. And she knew that Detective Wanwan could evade anything like that with ease, and that she'd *want* to shoot at Samoyed Mask *f* once things were over.

"But..."

What worried Kino the most was the possibility of Inid accidentally shooting her own arm or leg.

"..."

Seeing Kino so worried, Inid decided to encourage her.

"Believe in me, who believes in you!"

"Ugh... all right!"

Kino made her decision.

Like it or not, Kino decided to assume that an American like Inid must have been trained to some degree on the usage of firearms



GAKUEN KINO

and reached into the pouch on her left side. From the tangle of weapons she drew out one firearm in particular.

"Wait, not this one."

Kino put the Murata rifle back into her pouch.

Prior to the deployment of the 1880(The thirteenth year of Meiji) Meiji Type 13 Murata Single-Shot Rifle, the Japanese military had relied on an expensive assortment of foreign-made firearms. Soon afterwards, the Murata became available for civilian purchase for affordable prices, making a name for itself as a sporting gun. Even now, it makes frequent appearances in works featuring hunters.

But this weapon had no place here on the battlefield, being more of a relic suited to a museum. After all, it was a single-shot rifle that could only hold one bullet at a time.

Why does Kino even have this ancient gun, anyway? Was it her grandmother's idea? Did she want Kino to take down a bear or something?

"Uh, let's see here... Which one should I get?" Kino wondered out loud, looking into her pouch. Oh! She's found one!

"A KRISS Super V submachine gun!"

Kino thrust her arm into the air. *Ta-da! Enter the action lines and gradient background!*

Today's secret weapon is the KRISS Super V submachine gun. V stands for Vector!

This state-of-the-art gun was announced and made available for sale very recently. A submachine gun that uses .45 caliber ACP rounds, it is about 40 centimetres long with the stock folded. A holo-sight is mounted on the top for ease of taking aim.

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The most interesting feature of this gun is the fact that it fires with very little recoil.

.45 ACP rounds are used with M1911 pistols (also known as the Colt Government), and are rather strong for handguns. They fire with a great deal of recoil, and firing on automatic makes it extremely difficult to handle the gun because it goes wild.

However, the KRISS Super V has a slide mechanism underneath that helps to diffuse the force of the recoil enough to fire on automatic while still keeping aim on the enemy. That's why it looks weird enough to joke around about it actually being a nail gun someone stole from a carpenter. With a long magazine, it can hold up to thirty rounds.

Seeing the KRISS Super V, Inid nodded confidently. Before handing Inid the gun, however, Kino took out a handkerchief from her pocket.

Inid took her long blond hair in a bunch and tied it all up with the handkerchief into a convenient ponytail. She then took out and donned a pair of sunglasses. And then, and then-

[There!]

Rrrrip!

To everyone's shock, she tore the left side of her long skirt so that it would be easier for her to move around. Her pale thigh was exposed for fanservice's sake.

"Whoa!" Samoyed Mask *f* broke formation to lie on the floor. He was probably planning to look up her skirt.

Kino stomped on him with all her might.



GAKUEN KINO

"Gah!"

[All right. Give me the gun. I'll fight alongside you!] Inid said with a smile, holding out a hand towards Kino.

"You can do it!"

Kino turned the gun around and handed the grip of the KRISS Super V to Inid.

Inid firmly gripped the weapon and looked over it, making sure to keep her index finger straight. She first unfolded the stock on the right side of the gun to check that it was locked.

Then, she pulled the lever on the left side to load the gun. She moved the selector from automatic to the 2-round burst option. This meant that each time she pulled the trigger, the gun would fire two rounds.

She undid the safety with her thumb and took aim at the monsters. Her finger wasn't yet hooked onto the trigger.

"You're pretty good. Looks like someone taught you a thing or two about guns." Kino said like an old man.

Approving of Inid's handling of the gun, Kino took out about thirty spare magazines shaped like long bricks of fudge and laid them out at Inid's feet.

Two people were better than one. Three were better than two, and four were better than three.

In battle, it is always better to have more allies than less. Our quartet was standing in a circle, covering one another's blind spots.

The only thing keeping that circle intact was a single word: Faith.

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The monsters around them finally reached complete maturation.

"Do you worst, you monsters!"

"Maintain discipline!"

"Apologies, but I will cut you down!"

"You're surprisingly weak, bro!"

GROWR! The monsters howled, and the warriors of justice began their battle against the horde surrounding them.

"I request covering fire!" Samoyed Mask *f* cried, leaping into the air further than any human possibly could. "Here I goooooo!" He yelled in midair. His pristine white form hovered against the blue backdrop of the sky for a single moment. after all, his enemies wouldn't wait for him.

Kino and Detective Wanwan also opened fire. They assaulted the monsters with a storm of bullets, not allowing them to pass.

Each time Kino turned her gun in one direction, the monsters before her scattered at once, leaving the monsters further back to squirm in to fill the gap a moment later. It was almost like watching a wave lick away at the shoreline.

My goodness! Look at that white blur diving into that wave! It's Samoyed Mask *f*!

"Haaah!"

It was a point-blank attack. With a katana in each hand (don't ask where he got the second one), Samoyed Mask *f* spun around in place like a top, cutting down every monster in his immediate vicinity. Wouldn't his eyes go all swirly if he does that?



GAKUEN KINO

Samoyed Mask *f*'s form had been completely engulfed by the dark wave of monsters, but it was easy to tell where he was attacking because that was the only place where the wave was weaker and ashes were being scattered around. Amazing!

"My turn!"

Kino focused her gun on a stronger part of the wave, weakening the strength of the monsters' assault.

Detective Wanwan could not be any more himself as he coolly calculated the distance between himself and the monsters, firing the Ultimax 100 in short bursts and shooting them down starting with the ones closest to him even by a margin of a single centimetre.

[...]

There was cold sweat running down Inid's cheek, but she fired the KRISS Super V from Kino's side to all the monster she could aim at. At this range, she couldn't miss if she wanted to.

Gunfire rang out like a series of explosions.

Click. Oh no! Kino's MG3 was out of ammo.

"Re-loading!" Kino called out without missing a beat. She was alerting the others that she needed time to reload.

[Got it!]

Inid reacted first. She turned the barrel of her gun in the direction Kino had been firing into, shooting over and over again into the wave of monsters clawing at them.

"Done! Thanks!"

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Kino took five seconds to replace her magazine and barrel before she was ready to fire again. This time, Inid stepped back to reload.

It was a perfect display of teamwork. Humans really are social creatures.

Oh? It looks like Detective Wanwan was having a bit of trouble.

"Tch."

Though his eyes were covered by sunglasses, anxiety flashed by his face.

"Wahahahaha! Allow me to be of assistance!"

With a sleazy burst of laughter, the white form of Samoyed Mask *f* flew overhead. After striking down a large number of monsters, he landed before Detective Wanwan's eyes. He began to cut down monsters so quickly that it almost looked like he had eight arms.

"Tch!"

He really was putting up a magnificent fight. Having been forced to rely on assistance in his weakness, Detective Wanwan bitterly reloaded.

"..."

Once he was finished, Detective Wanwan had the option of shooting down Samoyed Mask *f* while he was still occupied by the monsters.

But that was a choice far beyond the realms of possibility. At this point in time, not even his Plan Z entailed such a thing.

"Hmph. Faith, is it?"



GAKUEN KINO

Detective Wanwan fired--not at Samoyed Mask *f*, but at the monster that was about to sneak up on Samoyed Mask *f* from behind.

Noticing this, Samoyed Mask *f* grinned, his teeth sparking brilliantly.

"Nice support! Remind me to give you a pat on the head later!"

"*No thank you!*" Detective Wanwan cried painfully. And he returned to providing Samoyed Mask *f* with support fire.

Meanwhile, on the school grounds.

"Looks like Mysterious Kino's at it again."

"She's louder than usual today."

The students were looking up at the rooftop, the source of all the commotion. They could just make out the forms of the squirming monsters, but they could not see our four heroes. All they could tell was the fact that the gunshots were loud enough to be a bother to anyone in the area.

Even during the last demon attack, residents at a local apartment complained to the school:

[Do you know how hard it was to get my baby to fall asleep? And then you had to go around firing so loudly!]

[I was in the middle of drowning in my feelings watching a drama. Thank you for completely ruining the moment!]

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[Great-grandpappy suddenly put a pot over his head and started fighting!]

Looks like they'll be getting more of those complaints this time.

"Maybe it's been so long since a demon appeared that she wants to blow off some stress?"

"But that's still overdoing it. *We're* the ones who have to clean up after her."

"Seriously. Who'd believe we picked up enough shells to fill up *buckets*?"

"I'm worried we'll end up getting lead poisoning or something."

"Wow... I wish I could fire a real gun, too..."

"You say something, gun freak?"

"No, never mind..."

The whole shebang had taken less than two minutes. The battle on the rooftop came to an abrupt end.

Kino struck several monsters with her gun, Samoyed Mask *f* spun one last time, and Detective Wanwan reached out to either side to stab a pair of monsters with the combat knives on his guns, all at the same time.

The countless monsters were no more.



GAKUEN KINO

"What's your status?" Kino asked, readying her MG3. Having just fired bullets like no tomorrow, the gun was steaming hot. The barrel was glowing a faint red. The steam hissing from the end of the barrel dissipated into the wind.

"All clear here." Detective Wanwan reported from behind Kino's back, holding his also-smoking Ultimax 100s.

"Where are the rest of them?" Samoyed Mask *f* asked, holding a pair of perfectly undamaged katanas.

"I'm a bit shook up, but I'll be peachy keen in no time!"

Inid answered in Japanese. She was reloading a new magazine onto her KRISS Super V with one knee on the ground.

The hundreds upon hundreds of monsters had all turned to ash. The mountain of dust lying atop the concrete roof soon eroded away, carried by the winds. Looks like all the laundry hanging in the area will be taking heavy damage today.

With three gunners firing off hundreds of rounds, the area around our heroes was covered by shell casings. It was blinding enough that one false step onto the casings would send your face smacking into the floor.

Kino put the MG3 back into her pouch and smiled at Inid, who was getting back on her feet.

"We did it!"

Detective Wanwan gave her the English translation. Inid nodded.

[Huh...?]

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Then, without warning, she powerlessly plunked down onto the floor. The KRISS Super V fell out of her hands and landed on the floor with a *clack*.

"Oh no! Are you hurt?"

Kino worriedly crouched at Inid's side. But Inid shook her head.

[I only just realized that I was scared. Haha... My legs feel like jelly... My father taught me to use a gun, but I never would have thought... that I'd end up really having to use one in a fight. Ahaha...]

"..."

Kino beamed.

"You did really well!"

"All right then! Let's go fight back against that demon!" Kino yelled.

Samoyed Mask *f* sheathed his sword and spoke. "The building will likely be completely booby-trapped. One step inside, and we'll be surrounded by monsters again. Would you still take that risk?"

"That's a stupid question. We're warriors of justice, slayers of demons! I'm a Gun Fighter Rider! There's no getting off of this bike I'm on!" Kino answered, taking out from her pouch an Auto Assault-12, also known as the AA12. At first glance this gun looks like something straight out of a toddler's scribbling, complete with overly large barrel, but this is actually an honest-to-goodness shotgun.



GAKUEN KINO

Just like the Saiga-12K, this gun can fire 12-gauge slugs on automatic. and with a gigantic drum magazine, it's capable of a brutal 20-round assault. The internal spring mechanism reduces the powerful recoil often created by 12-gauge slugs, so it's possible to fire on automatic while keeping a steady aim on your target.

More terrifying, however, is the special state-of-the-art ammunition called the FRAG-12, which is often presented in a set with the AA12.

To put it simply, it is a miniature grenade. Normally, shotguns fire lead spheres, but the FRAG-12 also explodes on contact. Obviously, one should never underestimate the difference between the impact of being hit by a tiny lead ball and the impact of a lead ball exploding on contact.

Who knows where Kino's grandmother could have gotten her hands on such a weapon?

"We'll fight fire with fire!" Kino declared courageously.

"Allow me to provide support." Detective Wanwan answered without missing a beat.

If they were going to be fighting indoors, shorter guns would be easier to handle. A pair of Heckler&Koch UMP45 submachine guns slid out of Detective Wanwan's sleeves. He was using .45 caliber ACP rounds for extra impact. The stock was folded, making the gun about 45 centimetres long.

"Then I--"

As Samoyed Mask *f* began--

'Never mind, just go home already!'

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'I'd like nothing more than to destroy you on the spot now!'

The above thoughts flashed through Kino and Detective Wanwan's heads, but they both remained silent. After all, some extra firepower couldn't do them harm.

"I shall protect Inid while the two of you are fighting. Or more specifically, I will protect her in my embrace! After all, unlike a certain somebody, she has a beautiful figure and sexy legs."

Ratatatatatatatatat!

Clangclangclangclangclangclangtomatotomatotomatotomato!

Inid watched the heated exchange for some time.

[Are you actually not on good terms?] She asked.

"As you can see."

[Well, yes.]

[We're just playing around.]

Kino, Detective Wanwan, and Samoyed Mask *f* answered.

Inid looked confused for a moment, but her uncertainty soon gave way to a look of seriousness.

[Um... everyone! Thank you. Thank you for fighting for my sake.]

"That's not it." Kino said.

[Huh?]

Kino handed something to Inid.

"Oh!"



GAKUEN KINO

It was the KRISS Super V, the gun Inid had been using up until just now. And a messenger bag jammed full of extra ammunition.

Kino grinned.

"Ui uiru (We will)..." She said confidently. "Faito tugezaa (fight together)."

"!"

Inid firmly took hold of the KRISS Super V.

"Thank you." She said in perfect Japanese, the kind where you couldn't tell which anime the line had come from. The sincerity in her voice was clear as crystal.

"Time for our counterattack! Show yourself, demon!"

BANG!

Kino kicked down the rooftop door, which had been strong enough to hold back even the demon. Why didn't she just open it?

Kino led the way, AA12 armed and at the ready. After her was Detective Wanwan, ready to provide support fire, Inid being protected by the others, and Samoyed Mask *f* at the flank.

Oh no! Several monsters jumped out of hiding from the ceiling of the stairwell and attacked our heroes!

Ratatatatatatatat!

Detective Wanwan shot them down before they could even touch the floor.

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They exited the stairwell into the long fourth-floor hallway. They had scarcely taken a few steps when the lockers opened up and five or so monsters snuck up on them from behind.

"Hah! Take this!"

But before they could do any harm, Samoyed Mask *f*'s katana cut them to pieces.

Was that a signal of some sort? The classroom doors slid open and hordes of monsters spilled out into the hallway.

"Do your worst! Haaaah!"

Kino repeatedly fired 12-gauge FRAG-12 rounds into the horde. They exploded on contact, scattering shrapnel everywhere and destroying multiple monsters with a single shot.

Detective Wanwan and Inid also opened fire. Their desperate battle in the narrow hallway had begun.

Monsters also swarmed towards them from behind.

"No entry beyond this point! You'd better try someplace else!" Samoyed Mask *f* spun again.

Whoosh! He sliced and diced and slashed and cut. Samoyed Mask *f* defended the hallway all by himself. Never underestimate the power of a sword in an enclosed location.

As the battle went on,

"Hm. Something strikes me as strange."

Samoyed Mask *f* said, rather seriously for who he was.

"What?" Kino asked, firing away and not even looking back at him.



GAKUEN KINO

"Why is it that the demon refuses to show itself?" Samoyed Mask *f* answered.

Detective Wanwan, firing both UMP45s, agreed.

"Of course... it's sent in so many monsters to attack us, so logically now would be the perfect chance for it to strike."

Kino nodded. It would be very difficult for them if such a powerful demon were to join the fray at this point. Maybe that was the very purpose of this trap.

"Do you think, perhaps, that the demon was also faced with something it didn't expect?"

"Maybe, but don't let your guard down."

"You too!"

Inid watched the trio banter and fight with such light hearts.

[...]

'Friends are wonderful.' Inid thought.

"You guys just about done? Where to next?"

After the battle in the hallway, Kino was replacing the large drum magazine on her AA12.

BOOM. BANG! BOOM! BOOM!

The sudden sound of explosions and the sensation of the building being shaken reached her.

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[W, what was that? An earthquake?] Inid asked worriedly, but Kino was far from scared. In fact, she welcomed the new turn of events.

"This must be her!"

Meanwhile, Detective Wanwan paled in fear.

"Those were Mk 2 grenades... Damn! It's her!"

Samoyed Mask *f*, of course--

"I wanna go home! NOOOOOO! I wanna leave!"

Samoyed Mask *f* suddenly began whining. The face underneath the mask was greener than an under-ripe tomato.

"Gotta man up, now." Kino said, grabbing Samoyed Mask *f* by the back of his collar.

"No! I have a tummyache! I wanna go home!"

Kino ignored Samoyed Mask *f*'s cries as she dragged him towards the sound of the explosions.

"We just have to get to those explosions, and we'll find the demon! Come on!"

Dragging along Samoyed Mask *f* and gently chucking him down the stairs whenever necessary, they arrived at a certain classroom on the second floor, where the sound of the explosions was coming from. They had encountered a grand total of zero monsters or demons on their way.

"I knew it."

"So it was her."



GAKUEN KINO

Guarding Inid, Kino and Detective Wanwan opened the door a crack to take a peek, with Samoyed Mask *f* still firmly grasped by the collar. His feet were tied together with rope.

And there they saw--

GUUUUOOOOOH!

The demon, standing on all fours, and--

"..."

A lone girl facing it down.

[Hm?]

Inid's eyes widened at the sight.

The girl was about twelve years of age. She had short white hair and emerald-green eyes much like those of Inid's. Her eyes, staring at the demon, were the epitome of disinterest.

She was wearing a pair of grey shorts that showed off her stick-thin legs, a brown long-sleeved shirt had a round neck, and a bag hanging from one of her shoulders, dangling down all the way to her hips.

The classroom interior was nothing less than a mess.

The walls were filled with holes and were nearly in ruins. Desks and chairs lay scattered in pieces over the floor. The windows were cracked and hazy, the only thing keeping them intact being the fact that they were made of bulletproof glass.

GUUUUOOOOOH! The demon cried from a corner of the classroom. It charged towards the little girl on all fours, scattering debris everywhere.

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"..."

The girl said nothing, instead reaching both hands into the bag hanging over hips.

[Look out!] Inid screamed softly. At the same time, the girl took several objects from the bag and lobbed them at the demon.

The objects hurling towards the demon were grenades. Six dull pineapple-shaped Mk 2 grenades, to be precise. By the time they were in the air, all six had lost their safety pins and their levers were engaged.

The grenades exploded on either side of the demon, which was now a mere two metres before the girl.

B-B-B-B-B-BOOOOOOM! A powerful noise and shockwave headed for Kino and the others in slow motion.

"Take cover!"

Kino quickly shut the classroom door.

Shrapnel danced in the classroom for some time. Some of the pieces rapped against the bulletproof windows. Several seconds passed before Kino opened the door a crack.

What they saw then was--

GUUUUOOOO! GRAAAARGH!

The demon, writhing on the floor in the middle of the smoke-filled classroom.

"..."



GAKUEN KINO

And the little girl, standing exactly where she had been before, saying absolutely nothing.

[My gosh... Who is that girl? How could she still be fine after that explosion?] Inid asked an understandable question. Kino was the one to answer her.

"Her name is Ti. She's a mysterious girl who uses grenades to help us... or actually, to help me. Although I don't know how she can be standing after all that."

The moment it occurred to Kino that she was curious to know--

"The 'Chain Blast Technique'." Samoyed Mask *f* answered quietly.

"Huh? You know how she did that?"

Samoyed Mask *f*, still pale with fright, spoke in a half-whisper.

"The Chain Blast Technique..."

It is a martial art that allows one to use explosives even in enclosed spaces. The user must calculate the location of each and every explosion as they set off multiple explosives. The shrapnel and the force of the explosions collide against each other and create a safe zone. A bubble, if you will. As long as the user makes absolutely certain to remain in this bubble, they will be protected from harm. That is why it is, in theory, possible to use explosives in close combat even at point blank range. It is the ultimate explosive technique, but one so dangerous that it does not allow for even a single micron or a hundredth of a second's worth of error. I would not recommend this technique to amateurs.

From Minmei publishing company's [Sixty-Four Explosive Techniques--From Fireworks to Nukes]."

"..."

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Kino was at a loss for words. She understood the technique in theory, but it shouldn't logically be possible for a human being.

"Huh... Uh. There's some pretty weird people in the world, huh?"

Trying to convince herself that the world was still sane, Kino once again peeked into the classroom.

The demon was still on the floor in pain.

Guoooh...

Ti looked down at it quietly, likely not planning to drop a grenade down its throat to put it out of its misery.

"What shall we do? To be frank, I'm not very comfortable around her..." Detective Wanwan confessed.

"Me neither..." Samoyed Mask *f* sniffed from behind them, his feet still bound.

"Yeah. I know." Kino agreed.

"What are you going to do?" Hermes asked. "We're okay for now since Ti is fighting that demon, but it's strong. If you rush into things and it gets away, you're going to have another big headache on your hands."

"I know, Hermes. All the failures I experienced today helped me learn my lesson--I shouldn't just charge in mindlessly if I want to defeat this one."

"So you have a plan?"

"You bet I do! There."

Kino grabbed Samoyed Mask *f* by the collar and braced herself.



GAKUEN KINO

"All right, you go first!"

She slammed the door open and tossed Samoyed Mask *f* into the classroom. Straight at the demon.

[Huh?]

A white cape fluttered by Inid's line of sight.

"AAAAAHHHHH!"

With a scream, Samoyed Mask *f* flew in a graceful arc and landed on the demon's belly.

GUOHH!

"Ack!"

The demon and Samoyed Mask *f* cried out at once. Their eyes met for a single moment.

"Hello there!"

GUOHHH!

SMACK! The enraged demon punched Samoyed Mask *f* with its right paw.

"Gah!"

Samoyed Mask *f* spun as he flew towards the back of the classroom, into the wall from which the blackboard had fallen. He slid to the ground with a plop.

"Eek."

And looking straight into his face was--

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"Are you okay?"

Ti.

Samoyed Mask *f*'s eyes opened.

"EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEK!"

An inhuman scream escaped Samoyed Mask *f*'s lips.

Guohh...

The scream was enough to bother the demon and its sensitive ears.

Kino's brilliant plan had worked. She could kill two birds with one stone by preventing Samoyed Mask *f* from getting in the way and using his screaming as a weapon at the same time.

The scream had shattered the bulletproof windows, sending glass shards flying like diamond dust.

"Detective Wanwan! Support fire!" Kino ordered, pointing at the demon.

"Understood!"

Detective Wanwan leapt into the classroom and began firing his UMP45s on automatic.

Kino also took up the AA12 from the floor and charged into the classroom, keeping a close eye on Inid behind her.

"TAKE THIS!"

BANGBANGBANGBANGBANGBANGBANGBANGBANG! She fired the 12-gauge rounds at the demon.



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BOOMBOOMBOOMBOOMBOOMBOOMBOOM! The grenades exploded upon touching the demon, knocking it backwards. The extraordinary force of the impact backed the demon against the blackboard.

After firing twenty rounds in a matter of seconds, Kino tossed aside the AA12 and drew Big Cannon from its holster.

She took aim at the demon and stood up against Inid.

"Come on! We'll get this one together!"

She was speaking in English, but Inid seemed to have understood.

[Yeah!]

Inid slowly reached out her left hand.

Kino's right hand and Inid's left hand were both clutching Big Cannon.

"Hey, I've got a ton of things I wanna ask you once you turn human again, but first I'm going to bring you back. After all, that's my mission."

With that, Kino nodded to Inid.

[Okay!] Inid nodded. Kino turned back towards the demon.

The moment she fired at the demon, Kino tossed off a certain line.

"Eliminate the target!"

As they took aim at the demon, Inid cried out one of her favourite lines.

"Fire!"

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They pulled the trigger together.

BAAAAAAAAAAAAANG!

The sound of Big Cannon firing rang out through the classroom.

And the bullet they fired together...

"Whoa!"

When the bespectacled man opened his eyes, he was sitting in front of the school's main entrance, tied up with rope with his four friends.

He realized that he wasn't wearing any clothes, and that his friends were all covered in bruises and were unconscious. Rolling around them were several Glock G18Cs.

"Hey! What the hell just happened?! Dammit! We're supposed to be professionals here!"

It was you, you idiot.

"Argh! Damn!"

The man desperately struggled to free himself. Just then, he heard the sound of a car approaching.

Coming to a halt before them was a medium-sized truck, its sides marked with the logo of a moving company. The truck was stopped between them and the school building, presumably to prevent



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students from seeing them on their way back into class. And disembarking from the truck were multiple soldiers.

They wore black combat uniforms and helmets with bulletproof shields. Under their helmets they wore black masks. Holstered at their sides were Smith&Wesson M5906 automatic handguns.

"What the..."

As the man and his groggy allies looked on in confusion, one of the soldiers pronounced gravely:

"You are all under arrest for unlawful possession of firearms."

"The hell are you people?!"

"If you don't know, best keep it that way." The soldier said, and ordered his men to bring the bound men onto the truck. Soldiers also went into the fake electrical service truck the men had brought to the school.

"Leave! We have no business with you!" The bespectacled man yelled. The soldier looked down at him.

"What? You *do* know who we are." ¹¹

The moving truck and the fake electrical service truck drove into the distance.

Watching them from the rooftop, Kino muttered to herself anxiously.

¹¹ The imperative form of 'leave' in Japanese is, of course, *kaere*. The KAERE agent mistook the bespectacled man's order for saying the name of their team.

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"Can we really leave it to them?"

The men who had just arrived were KAERE, government agents who had spectacularly failed to be of any help the last time they appeared.

"So they're still in operation after all..."

That's right.

"I'm sure things will be all right. The Japanese police will cooperate with the FBI and find the ones responsible." Detective Wanwan said in both English and Japanese.

"..."

Ti had been clinging to his head ever since the battle ended, but he was doing his best to ignore her, knowing that resistance was futile.

One annoying thing about Ti was the fact that, whenever Detective Wanwan showed even a hint of hostility towards the weakened Samoyed Mask *f*, Ti would notice instantly and begin her cheek-rubbing attack. She was like the Monkey King's headband in human form.

"Sniffle..."

Samoyed Mask *f* was sitting on the floor beside them, hugging his knees to his chest. The face under the mask was in tears. His hands were clutched over his abdomen.

[Everyone...]

Once the truck had left, Inid took off her sunglasses and looked at her four friends. She took off her earmuffs and handkerchief hair tie. Her long blonde hair fluttered in the wind.



GAKUEN KINO

[Thank you for everything.]

"It was no problem." Kino laughed.

"This is my duty." Detective Wanwan answered coolly, Ti still clinging to his head.

"..." Ti said silently.

"You're quite welcome... I suppose it's time for me to depart." Samoyed Mask *f* said, still seated. He then stood up, and left ahead of the others via the staircase. Staggering, of course.

"Allow me to take my leave as well. Hah!"

With Ti still perched atop his head, Detective Wanwan leapt into the air and disappeared behind the gymnasium.

Students were returning to the school building from the grounds. Sixth period was now over, and that meant the end of classes. They could see students returning home with bags in hand, and others going off for extracurricular activities one last time before exams.

"I'll be going now too. That was fun! Classes are over for today, so go home and get some rest! And remember to come back tomorrow!" Kino said. Since Detective Wanwan had already left, Hermes translated for her,

With that,

"Hyah!"

Kino lightly leapt off the railings and down four floors onto the ground, her short black hair and uniform flapping in the wind.

"..."

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Inid watched her in stunned silence, then raised her head and looked up at the clear blue skies.

[I had fun too. See you tomorrow.]



GAKUEN KINO

Chapter 6 - Finale: In the Sunlight ~Shine~

It was the day after the battle. In other words, Tuesday.

Just like yesterday, the weather was clear and refreshing. The mild breeze added a layer of cool to the autumn air.

The school building was still a bit of a mess in some places, but the repairs had been nearly completed overnight. So classes were on as usual. This school really doesn't want to give students a day off, huh?

"Dammit! I fought so hard yesterday that I slept in too long!"

"I'm just going to remind you that I did my best to wake you up this morning."

Kino and Hermes entered the classroom in the nick of time.

"Huh?"

The seat next to Inuyama's was empty. Inid was nowhere to be seen.

"What's going on?"

"Dunno."

Two seconds later, the homeroom teacher entered the room right on time.

"Good morning, everyone."

Homeroom began. Kino raised her hand.

"Sir, is Inid away today?"

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"Oh, yes. That reminds me..." He said, and nonchalantly dropped a bombshell on the students.

"Inid is going back to America today."

The class broke out into hushed chattering.

"What?! Why?" Kino asked, getting off her seat.

"..."

Inuyama's cool facade cracked ever-so-slightly.

"I was informed of this just now myself. They said something about a sudden change of plans..." The teacher answered, "She will be going back to school in America. Unfortunately, Inid has to leave from Narita Airport at just past ten this morning, so she could not be here to say goodbye."

"..."

Kino plunked down onto her seat in defeat.

Her classmates began whispering in disappointment amongst themselves.

"I see... so Inid's going back to school in America..." Kino mumbled. "I'm so happy for her..."

The teacher began to give the class Inid's contact information, but his voice did not reach Kino's ears.

Where there were meetings, there were partings. Kino quietly shut her eyes.

Goodbye.



GAKUEN KINO

She silently said her farewells.

-Chapter 6 End-

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"HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!!!"

Chako-sensei burst into the classroom, slamming the door open with almost enough force to destroy it.

"Gah!"

The homeroom teacher was so shocked that he found himself practically fending off a heart attack. "Kuroshima-sensei, are you *trying* to murder me?"

It was a completely justified complaint, but Chako-sensei proudly ignored him and smiled at her two underlings--the members of the Take Action Now Club.

"Guys! We're leaving! You have four seconds to get ready!"

"Wait! Where are we going again?!" Kino asked. Chako-sensei answered without missing a beat.

"Narita Airport, where else?"

They were being dragged down the hall by Chako-sensei.

"Sensei, I know how you feel, but I'm pretty sure we won't make it in time even if we left now." Kino commented.

"Even if we were to race down the highway at full speed it would be difficult to arrive on time." Inuyama agreed.

"Young people these days have no determination! Don't you know that it's part of our club's description to make the impossible



GAKUEN KINO

possible? Have you already forgotten the promise we made that day?"

Though Kino desperately wanted to point out that Chako-sensei had missed the point and that she had never made any such promises, she held back her opinions and followed Chako-sensei.

They had just arrived at the shoe lockers and were changing out of their indoor shoes when their third member joined them.

"Oh? Good morning, everyone."

Shizu was just stepping into the building from the school gates. As usual, he wore a katana at his side. Several doves flew past him. Actually, is he late? Pretty bald-faced for being tardy, huh?

"That's everyone, then! Let's move out!" Chako-sensei neglected to explain anything as she dragged her three students out into the grounds.

And as soon as they stepped out of the building,

"Whoa!"

They were suddenly overwhelmed by a huge roar and a blast of sand.

Kino looked up into the sky, at the source of the sound.

It was a large helicopter about 17 metres in length. It was painted in two colours, the underside being grey and the top painted white. Only the top of the back of the helicopter was blue. It bore an emblem of a round sun, and the words "Ground Self-Defense Force".

This was an EC225LP Super Puma Mk II.

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It is a passenger transport helicopter, part of the First Helicopter Brigade, based in Kisarazu. It is used to transport VIPs, having carried delegates between the airport and the hotel at the Lake Toya G8 Summit.

One such helicopter was now descending into the school grounds, kicking up a veritable sandstorm. Chako-sensei looked up at it and smiled at everyone as though they were about to go on a picnic.

"We'll take this baby to Narita!"

"Of course. It looks like we'll make it on time after all." Inuyama said calmly.

"Perfect day for flying, wouldn't you agree?" Shizu said blandly.

The helicopter touched down onto the ground. A member of the JSDF stepped out and gestured to everyone.

"Let's go."

Chako-sensei began to walk towards the helicopter with no sense of shock. Kino ran after her.

"Is that chopper yours, too? Did you take out a loan for it, sensei?" Kino asked loudly, not willing to lose out to the sound of the helicopter.

Chako-sensei turned around and winked.

"Of course not! I'm just borrowing it!"



GAKUEN KINO

Morning. The departure lobby at Terminal 1 of Narita Airport.

Announcements in Japanese and English were being made in the somewhat crowded lobby. The people began to all move in one direction.

And in the crowd was Inid Smith.

Her long blonde hair was tied into a ponytail. She wore jeans and a T-shirt with the character *Katsu*(喝) printed over the chest. Over her shirt she was wearing a blouson.

It was a rather humble manner of dress, but that was offset by the men in black suits standing around her, eyes glinting. However, they didn't seem to be terribly tense.

A man in his early sixties, carrying her bag, spoke to her in English.

[Miss Inid. I'm sure you must be sad to have to leave Japan, but we must be on our way now. There are many people waiting at the departure gate.]

Inid nodded.

[All right, Sebas.]

[Miss Inid, my name is Johnson.]

[Haha, I just wanted to try calling you that. Let's go.] Inid said, stepping onto the escalator going down to the departure desk.

"There you are!" Kino's voice echoed from the lobby.

[Huh?]

Inid turned around.

"Hold on!"

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Running towards her was Kino, waving her hands frantically with her face covered in sweat. Behind her was Shizu. Following them was Inuyama, and Chako-sensei, who was hugging his head from behind him for some reason.

[Kino! Everyone! How did you get here?] Inid stood in shock. Kino ran up to her.

"We came to say goodbye! I'm so glad... so glad we made it! You're going back to school in the US, right? That's awesome! Goodbyes are supposed to be sad, but I'm so happy for you right now!" She said first.

Inuyama translated for Inid. Her green eyes grew hazy with tears.

[Kino...]

Tears ran down her cheeks. Inid reached out and embraced Kino tightly.

"Huh? Haha..."

Kino grinned embarrassedly and also hugged Inid back.

After a moment, they looked one another in the eye.

"I still have a place to which I may return. There can be no greater happiness."

"Yeah! You have to make up for all the fun you missed out on! And come visit Japan again sometime!"

Kino reached into one of her pouches and took out several varieties of canned ramen noodles she bought in Akihabara.



GAKUEN KINO

"I actually bought these for myself, but I guess this is my goodbye present for you. Sorry, I didn't have time to go shopping. But you probably haven't tried all the flavours yet, right?"

[My gosh! Thank you, Kino! I'm going to share them with my parents when I get back to America and tell them all about Akihabara, and how amazing it was!] Inid smiled. There was a laughably large quantity of cans, so her butler took them instead.

[I've prepared something for you as well.]

Shizu gave to her with both hands the katana that had been at his side until just now.

[I feel the same way as Kino. Please take this in memory of all the times we all spent together. I have multiple katanas in my possession, so I ask that you take one. I'm sure your butler could not object as long as you didn't buy it yourself.]

Inid burst into laughter at the last part and glanced at her butler.

[Is that all right with you, Johnson?]

The butler shrugged in defeat and nodded.

Inid took the katana in her arms and hugged it tightly.

[Thank you. Thank you so much.]

This katana would soon cause her a great deal of grief in the baggage checks, but let's put that aside for now.

[Something for you, Inid.]

Inuyama took out from his pocket a pair of sunglasses. A very familiar pair of sunglasses. Where could we have seen them before?

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[Thank you so much. I'll take good care of them.] Inid took the sunglasses and offered Inuyama a handshake. Inuyama took her hand a tight grip.

It was time for her to go, the butler said.

Finally, Chako-sensei stepped forward.

[And this here's from me. A souvenir from your trip to Japan!]

Chako-sensei handed her a large, bulky brown envelope. Inid took out the contents.

It was a pile of photographs.

The photo on top of the pile was one they took together in front of the Great Buddha statue at Kamakura.

[Oh my gosh!]

[I was actually our photographer! Sorry I didn't ask permission to take pictures beforehand!] Chako-sensei said. Hey. I thought it was pretty obvious you were taking pictures.

And finally.

[There's a lot of pictures, so why don't you take your time looking through them after take-off?]

[I'll be looking forward to it. Thank you so much for everything, Kuroshima-sensei. I'll never forget this week I spent with the Take Action Now Club.]

[Come visit anytime! The Take Action Now Club will never die!]

[Thank you!]

[Also,]



GAKUEN KINO

[Yes?]

[That faith you've found will never disappear. The world's not that nonsensical of a place, you see? The only nonsense here is a bunch of weird parody novels, and that's more than enough!]

I'm terribly sorry. For so many things.

Afterwards, Inid stepped onto the escalator going down, holding a katana in her right hand, a brown envelope in her left, and a pair of sunglasses tucked into her shirt. Her butler followed, carrying an armful of canned ramen noodles.

"Thank you!"

And with that, Inid disappeared from view.

The jumbo jet carrying Inid began to make its way down the Narita Airport runway.

It lifted off the ground and took to the skies.

Inid sat in her window seat in business class, wearing the strangely familiar sunglasses Inuyama had given her.

When she arrived in Japan, it was raining. But now it was clear. She could see many things clearly.

The Narita Airport Terminal building slowly grew smaller.

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[What an interesting group of people.] Her butler commented from the seat beside her.

[Yes...] Inid nodded.

She waved at the window.

Narita Airport Terminal 1 rooftop, the airport observatory.

"Hm? Is that it?"

"Yes, that must be her plane."

"I hope she will be all right."

"Inid's going to be fine."

Kino, Inuyama, Shizu, and Chako-sensei looked up at the airplane as it zoomed away into the distance with a roar.

Enveloping the plane was a clear blue sky.

"Let's meet again! Try the miso flavour!" Kino yelled, waving her arms. Again and again.

"Whoa, she's answering." Hermes said quietly, but Kino didn't seem to hear.

The plane grew smaller and smaller until it finally disappeared from sight.

"Well then..." Chako-sensei said. Oh! The ending song's started playing, starting off with the piano solo.



GAKUEN KINO

"Since we're all here, why don't we do some sightseeing and have lunch together before we go back? Who wants to go to Narita-san Shinsho Temple?"

Are you planning to skip classes?

"Excellent idea. I'm all for it."

"Me too."

Shizu and Inuyama answered. Kino thought for a moment.

"Do they make anything tasty there?"

"The area's famous for eel. How about unagi-don for lunch today?"

"I'm in!"

The moment Kino voiced her agreement, the ending song transitioned into an energetic rock tune.

The final image was a still shot of Kino and the others, smiling as they walked forward, with the airplane in the background.

The ending credits began, along with the vocals.

Asphalt-

Actually, it might be a bit of a bother to write out the lyrics, so I'll stop myself here.

After the ending song--

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"This is delicious! Can I have seconds, sensei?"

"Go right ahead! After all, all of this is being paid for by the club budget. Just make sure to finish your portion."

"Of course! Anyone who doesn't finish food they ordered should be thrown into hell! Excuse me, one more unagi-don special please!"

As Kino happily munched on her unagi-don, Inid was flying over the Pacific. She was slowly looking over Chako-sensei's photos one at a time.

The picture they took in front of the Great Buddha statue.

A photograph with Yuigahama as the background.

Herself, smiling at the "Great Luck" fortune she drew.

A picture she took with the cats on Enoshima.

Playing with the waves in the Shonan sea.

Was it the camera, or was Chako-sensei that good? Every picture looked good enough to be on a magazine cover.

In the photos, Inid was surrounded by Kino's smiles, Inuyama's cool demeanour, and Shizu's handsome visage. She was smiling.

Inid in real life was smiling, too.

She flipped through the countless pictures. She looked at a one from the time when they visited a conveyor belt sushi restaurant after their visit to Akihabara. Kino had a pile of dishes reaching towards the ceiling. Inid was staring with her eyes the size of dinner plates. She flipped over to the next picture.

[Huh?]



GAKUEN KINO

There were still some pictures left.

She didn't remember taking any pictures after the restaurant. Inid tilted her head and looked at the next picture.

[Oh my gosh!] She yelled out loud in surprise. The butler asked her if everything was all right.

[No, it's nothing.] Inid lied, still reeling from shock.

In the picture was herself and Mysterious Gun Fighter Rider Kino, who was firing her MG3 as if protecting her.

It was a messy picture taken from a security camera, but that only made the scene more real.

[Ahaha.]

Inid smiled and turned over to the next picture. This one was of her carefully walking through the hallway with Kino and Detective Wanwan.

The next was of the three of them, plus Samoyed Mask *f*, discussing a battle strategy on the rooftop. Upon closer inspection, she found that Samoyed Mask *f* was making a V with one hand behind his back, towards the camera.

After that was a picture of herself, bravely firing the KRISS Super V with her thigh bared.

The final picture was of her pointing a revolver at the demon alongside Kino. Even Ti was visible in a corner.

[...]

Inid placed all the pictures back into the envelope.

With the warm weight on her lap, she mumbled to herself.

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[That was a wonderful holiday.]

And...

[But still, Kino, Inuyama, and Shizu-senpai all have it so rough. The Take Action Now Club is fun, but I don't know if I could take so much.]

She cocked her head as she said:

[Who'd have thought they'd have to wear cosplay while fighting demons?]

-Chapter 6 End (For real this time!)-

To be continued?